BOOK 6 START 2024-11-04;

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0 PAT **UL1 Book 5 - July 29th** https://www.patreon.com/posts/108089848 2024-07-24

I'll have Book 5 start July 29th.

For those who are finding my Patreon page and this is the first 'shift' between books - just know I usually pass till next monday once a story ends.

Looking forward to sharing the next adventure :)

PAT 1 275 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 275**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-113752863 2024-21-10

Chapter 275

We have been caught. Calm yourself—do not react!

Everything inside Max yearned to go wild. His weapon was poised, ready to lash out against the wall in a desperate attempt to free himself from this prison.

Max’s heart began to race, and feelings he hadn’t had since this entire adventure started began to bloom once more.

This is not the wagon! You are not the same boy! Now breathe. Slowly. In and out. We shall get through this. I will help you.

Keeping his eyes closed, he began to breathe as his skill told him to. Each breath settled himself just a little more.

Good. Now slowly walk around the room. Do not touch the wall, but just hold your hands out near the stone. Let us see what our captor has imprisoned us in.

Why not strike the wall? What if I can destroy it?

Think… calm down and think. Inside you is a mind. Use it! Someone who is strong enough to move faster than you could react and to push you through a portal is obviously powerful enough to have built a room designed to hold people.

Right now they may not be certain how strong you are. Until we show our true potential, we will keep certain cards hidden.

His mind was racing with thoughts of Tanila and others. It took every ounce of willpower to not lash out at the wall. His mind had begged him to at the start, but his skill was right.

Slowly, he moved toward the wall ten yards away. His steps made no sound as he moved across the worked stone.

Holding out a hand, Max stopped a few inches away.

That is close enough. Now walk slowly around the room. Keep the same distance.

I'm assuming we are being watched or studied somehow? I don't sense any openings in the stone. It all feels the same.

Which is why you are going to do what I ask. Allow me to use some of my power and knowledge.

Each step felt like agony as Max moved toward the corner. The box felt like it was going to shrink at any moment. Every other step, he took another deep breath, fixing his mind on waiting and seeing what might happen.

After what seemed like an eternity, Max was back at the spot he had started from.

Do one more pass, hold your hand lower, near your knees.

If you say so…

Have you come up with some way to suddenly be free, or does my request seem worthless at the moment?

Forgive me… I'm a little overwhelmed… And thank you for helping.

A sense of acknowledgment came, and Max made a second loop, keeping his hand where he had been instructed.

Once more, with your arm lifted high.

Sighing, Max completed the third circuit and then stepped back.

So what did you find?

There is a barrier of magic around the stone. It won't hurt you to touch it, but I would avoid it just in case. Also I'm not certain we could penetrate it, even with our combined power. My biggest fear lies in the unknown. Something weird is in the aura. It tickles my memory, but I cannot recall why. For now I would suggest returning to the center, sitting down and waiting.

For what?

Eventually your captor will return. Perhaps not in person but in some way or shape. When the right moment comes, we will work on our escape. Until then we bide our time.

Would retrieving a lightstone and reading be allowed?

Most likely that would help the passing of time. You could even pull out a chair, bring a little food. Trust me, whoever has captured you isn't far away. A lot of power and resources went into this moment. For now, rest. I need to rest as well. The shield around us helps me some, not requiring as much power.

Max stored his weapon and shield and then pulled a chair out and set it down in the middle of the room. A small table came next and then a lightstone.

As the warm glow began to fill the area, the reality of his cell hit.

Cold gray stones, each cut twelve inches in length, were set upon each other with the tiniest lines between each one.

Taking a book from storage out, he sat down, opened it, and began to read.

***

One book down.

Setting the finished book on the table, another book appeared in his hand. Jerky came next, and a flask of water. He didn't need to drink or eat as much since his stats had grown, but part of it was to help pass the time and provide a semblance of normality.

The presence is there. Unlike the first four hours with nothing, now I sense the same thing I often felt outside the tower and even at the colosseum.

Just read. If you desire sleep, let me know, and I will keep watch while you rest. For now we wait. Trust me when I say that he will break first. If we play the game as we are right now, whoever is watching, their desire for us to grovel, plead, or beg will break first.

***

Wake up. They are near. Do not react.

His eyes flew open, and Max pulled out the lightstone, setting it on the table.

Across the room ahead of him, a single stone was removed. A pair of silver eyes stared at him, blinking twice as the light went out.

Whoever was watching him, no words came. They just stood there, staring at Max.

Is this now a new contest?

It would appear so. Pull out your book, read. Even if you can't focus on the words, count each word, see how long it takes, and then turn the page. Do not acknowledge them.

It has been three days now. If you weren't here, I wouldn't be able to deal with this. There is no doubt in my mind that I would have gone crazy and attacked that wall with everything I had.

So talking with yourself, even if it is me isn't crazy?

Max laughed out loud, his voice echoing in the room. Smiling, he counted the words and considered what his skill had told him to do.

I think I got this… between you and me I can easily last longer.

***

He’s back… it appears he is interested in what I am doing.

I doubt any of his previous guests started creating potions inside their cell. Yet you sit here, smashing up herbs. Creating the fire with a lighting device was a nice way to hide your power.

Grinning, Max stirred the liquid in the small pot he had burning. The stone underneath was prized because no fumes were given off as it heated the liquid to whatever temperature he desired. No tricky flare-ups.

As he worked, watching and adding other ingredients as needed, Max could sense the one watching him shift and their face bunch up, the silver eyes glaring at him.

Slowly, as he prepared to add the green liquid to the potion bottles he had sitting out, a voice radiated around the room.

“You are very different than I expected. Tell me Max Hoste, why do you not seem to care that I have imprisoned you?”

Should I lie?

No… he won’t buy that. If he knows who you are, there is no point denying it. For now, play along. Try to get him to talk more. If he does, we win; if he doesn’t, we win. Just keep your answers short.

“Not much else to do, might as well be productive.”

Silence was the response, and with steady hands, Max filled the bottles, six of them resting on his small wooden table.

[Healing Potion Created x 6]

[6 Experience Gained]

Sighing, he picked them up, putting them into a box that appeared in his hand and stored them all.

Looking bored, he began to put away all of his supplies, then deactivated the heating stone and stored it.

Bringing his chair back out, Max sat on it and closed his eyes.

“Goodnight.”

The person behind the missing block was trembling. The outline of their head wasn’t steady, like normal, but rather it moved just enough to reflect a body that wasn’t still.

Nostrils flared, and Max kept his face blank, letting himself breathe slowly.

Do you want to keep watch? If I fall asleep, it might lull them into a sense of something where a mistake is made.

Laughter echoed inside his head.

It would appear you are learning fast. One should fear being captured by you if you can master it this quickly.

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“Why don’t you tell me how you feel? I know you are dying inside there.”

Glancing up over the top of the pages of his book, Max frowned.

Those gray eyes lit up for a moment, in anticipation at what he might say.

“I’m okay. Got a library I can finally read through.”

Next to him on the floor were over thirty books, all stacked neatly. Some days, he read one book; some days, he read two. The fact was he had well over three hundred books stored inside. Not all of them were going to be great reads, but every day, the person behind the wall appeared.

A low growl came, and Max looked back down at the book.

They are breaking. That is twice in three days. Each time, something else is revealed.

When do I ask the next question? We’re over two weeks into this.

Do not forget that our lives are on the line. We may only get one chance at escape. If we are not absolutely certain it is our only chance, or if we can succeed, we should not take it.

Rereading the page again, Max knew his skill was right. The clock never stopped ticking, and he had to ignore the knowledge that somewhere Tanila was probably worried sick.

Even worse the idea that the Faction might suffer from his disappearance.

Surely fights wouldn't break out because I'm gone…

You cannot worry about them. Unless you return, nothing matters. Escape first, then deal with whatever may have taken place.

Once more, the companionship pulled Max back from the whirlpool that always seemed ready to draw him under.

We want to bet on how long till they appear again?

No more than a week. Trust me when I say, something about this one is off. I believe he is actually afraid of you. A rare thing for one in his business.

Max glanced up from the book for a moment and saw those same silver eyes locked upon him. He smirked, turning his attention back to the book about food in the elven capital, feeling the person behind the wall almost vibrating with how much they shook.

***

"ANSWER ME! DO YOU NOT FEAR DEATH?!"

Opening his eyes, Max yawned, smacked his mouth a few times, and shrugged.

"No."

After a few seconds he closed his eyes again, sensing a shift in the room.

Be ready. Our chance may come. I will tell you if I think it is there, but if you truly believe there is a moment, know I will give everything I can to it.

Max cracked an eyelid as he turned his head. The stone was changing from solid blocks to stone bars. It was as if someone had cut away four inches in columns. Each bar was four inches wide and ran vertically.

Behind them was another room with a few doors. Yet Max wasn't focused on what he sensed. Instead it was the man who stood before him.

He was thin, his face had a scar from the jaw to his ear, and those silver eyes bored into Max. The sneer on the man's face seemed wrong. Like he was angry and upset with Max for doing something.

Taunt him.

"Well that's a face only a mother could love."

"Who do you think you are?! Do you not realize I could leave you here?! You could die in here, and no one would find your body!"

Make him feel weak. Play into his fears.

"It's true, but I can last years, maybe even more. Judging from this room, you need this place. Which means you need me dead, yet you can't seem to grow the balls to try to make that happen, even while I sleep."

Both of his fists clenched over and over, a crackling noise coming from his joints as he stood there in his simple black outfit.

Looks like you were right… it wasn't even another week.

His skill began to laugh, and Max smiled, before he took a deep breath and sighed.

"Do me a favor. Either do something worthwhile, let me go, or go away. I'd rather read and relax than listen to you."

Before he could react, Max sensed a portal underneath and above him.

It's begun.

1 Chapter 275

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1884372/chapter-275 2024-11-05

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Max's heart began to race, and feelings he hadn't had since this entire adventure started began to bloom once more.
This is not the wagon! You are not the same boy! Now breathe. Slowly. In and out. We shall get through this. I will help you.
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Good. Now slowly walk around the room. Do not touch the wall, but just hold your hands out near the stone. Let us see what our captor has imprisoned us in.
Why not strike the wall? What if I can destroy it?
Think… calm down and think. Inside you is a mind. Use it! Someone who is strong enough to move faster than you could react and to push you through a portal is obviously powerful enough to have built a room designed to hold people.
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Holding out a hand, Max stopped a few inches away.
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Max cracked an eyelid as he turned his head. The stone was changing from solid blocks to stone bars. It was as if someone had cut away four inches in columns. Each bar was four inches wide and ran vertically.
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Taunt him.
“Well that’s a face only a mother could love.”
“Who do you think you are?! Do you not realize I could leave you here?! You could die in here, and no one would find your body!”
Make him feel weak. Play into his fears.
“It’s true, but I can last years, maybe even more. Judging from this room, you need this place. Which means you need me dead, yet you can’t seem to grow the balls to try to make that happen, even while I sleep.”
Both of his fists clenched over and over, a crackling noise coming from his joints as he stood there in his simple black outfit.
Looks like you were right… it wasn’t even another week.
His skill began to laugh, and Max smiled, before he took a deep breath and sighed. “Do me a favor. Either do something worthwhile, let me go, or go away. I’d rather read and relax than listen to you.”
Before he could react, Max sensed a portal underneath and above him.
It’s begun.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

I know waiting isn't fun but I hope you're ready for a whole new adventure in this story!

PAT 2 276 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 276

https://www.patreon.com/collection/176837?view=expanded 2024-10-22

Chapter 276
The two purple, grape-colored portals sandwiched him, and before he could take a breath, Max found himself standing on a four-by-four-foot platform.
His eyes focused almost immediately, and glancing around, he saw a pool of lava that stretched for over a hundred yards in every direction. He was in some dome, carved out inside a mountainside from the way the rocks looked, and off to his left was a small ledge with a single door.

“Let’s see what you can do!”
The voice of his captor echoed through the area, and Max didn’t see the man anywhere.
Thoughts?
Silence was his answer, and for a moment a fear of being alone came over him.
We’re ten feet above the lava. The ceiling is fifty yards above us at its highest peak. Based on the distance to the door and the amount of space we have around us, we can make it, but we’ll have to reveal one of our spells. Two would be easier, but for now I think we need to continue to hide what we can do.
Use your stone wall. Summon it on the platform, pick it up, and toss it about one third of the way when I tell you to. While you do that, summon a boulder, aim it for the other third, and time your running.
The stone wall shouldn’t sink that fast, but you won’t have a lot of time to waste.
Anything else?
Get dressed.
Chuckling, Max wanted to reply but knew his skill was right. He was going to need every ounce of power he had from his equipment to pull this off.
[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-Old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 406/1000
Tower Experience: 40.00%

HP: 18,680/18,680
MP: 6340/6340
Stamina: 4670/4670
STR: 900
DEX: 942
CON: 934
INT: 634
WIS: 634

Defense of the Dragon - 20.0%
Defense of the Demon - 20.0%
Demon Essence: - 293

Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase
Merfolk King’s Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement
Sand Worm’s Skin Chest - 10 STR/CON + 10% Magic Resist +20% Crushing Damage
Cubed Bracers - 25 STR/DEX/CON
Belt of the Golem - 4 STR/CON +25% Damage Decrease Slashing/Piercing
Scout Spider Helm - 5 STR/DEX/CON Invisible State, Grants Minor Poison Resist
Cloak of Spider - 5 Dex. Spider Walk - 5 Mins / 24 Hour Cooldown
Green Ring - 1 DEX
Black Rabbit Ring - 2 DEX
Ring of the Golem Prince - 4 CON +25% Magic Resist
Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase
Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase
Bracelet of Sand Worm - 10 STR/CON Minor Acid Resist
Bonded Heart - 50 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - 20% Mana Regen 10% Spell Potency
Tentacle Ring - 40 STR/DEX/CON
Ring of Casting - 40 INT/WIS 10% Spell Casting Speed
Conqueror of the Broken Prince - 40 STR/DEX/CON +30% Damage Larger Enemies, Cleaving
Legendary Free Bow - 100 DEX 50 CON
*****

Remind me how we got caught?

I wasn’t paying attention… I’m guessing you want me to put on an act?

Yes. You could easily span this gap with just the stone wall, but that would show your potential. Revealing you are capable of casting is far better than giving up the information about your stats. And you look silly holding a bow and a halberd, but I understand why.

Putting away both for a second, Max summoned the stone wall on the platform and snapped it off from the side, holding the large fifteen-yard section of rock in his hands.

Toss it and start summoning your boulder, and jump a second after the wall lands.

His throwing skill told him exactly where it needed to go, and with a small flick that he made look harder, it soared about thirty-five yards.

Max was moving, knowing when it would hit, jumping from the platform and controlling his body with ease. The boulder he had forming ahead of him was pushed farther as he moved, and when he landed on the stone wall that sent out a shower of lava, he took another two steps and jumped again.
His feet touched down on the ball of stone, and one step was all it took to propel himself the remainder of the distance, landing on the small rocky ledge near the closed door.
Laughter echoed through the cavern, and the simple wooden door vanished as he got close to it. In its place was now a pulsing green portal.
“Impressive, Max. A warrior with the ability to cast spells. Tell me what all can your black skill do?”
“Does this take me back to my cell? If not, I’m going to be honest, I’d rather it did,” Max replied.
No reply came, and seconds turned into a minute.
“Seriously? I can pull out my chair again.”
Storing his bow, Max’s simple chair appeared, but before it touched the ground, an angry voice boomed across the cave.
“Who do you think you are?! Do you not realize I can kill you at any moment I desire?!”
Smacking his lips, Max sighed and put his chair down and plopped down on it.
“Can you? I mean if you could, why don’t you? I’m guessing that was your poison that failed. From what I heard it isn’t cheap.”
Is the room shaking?
No… it’s your captor’s presence. They are angry, and it is bleeding over whatever they have control over here.
Where is here?
I am not certain.
Another minute passed, and with no response, Max took out a book and began to read, ignoring the portal not far behind him.
His senses were focused everywhere his Sonar skill reached, and his body was ready to move.
Frustration had eaten at him for the first few days. Being distracted and thinking he was finally safe had led to him getting caught. He hadn’t been sure if his captor had been waiting, watching and preparing for a moment when his guard was down.
Pages turned, and soon a third of his book had been read through, when he sensed the portal above and below him.
Don’t!
Max fought the urge of trying to dodge the two purple portals that once again were at his feet and head, sending him wherever this crazy person wanted.

His arm moved, and he grabbed his chair which was tipping over, landing on his feet as he found himself in the cell once more.
The walls hadn't changed since he had been taken from the room. The vertical columns, which allowed him to see another room surrounding his, remained. Slowly turning, Max saw that his captor had not returned.
Do you have any idea of the spell or ability he is using? Thoughts on the cooldown?
There are lots of spells and abilities that allow one to move between their own world and others. Ones that permit travel between worlds are very demanding and often have either a long cooldown or cost enormous amounts of power. You might be correct in your assumption. He couldn't move you so quickly back here…
Setting his chair down in the middle of the room once more, Max opened his book and read, waiting for the silver eyed individual to return.
***
"You vex me!"
The sudden outburst caught Max off guard. His captor was a man, which he had determined after the silver eyed man showed up in a sheer, see-through outfit about twenty minutes ago. He hadn't said a word, simply standing there in that god-awful outfit.
"Sounds like your problem. You brought me here, remember?"
"Do you even know why?! Do you understand what you represent?!"
Glancing up for a moment, he held the man's gaze and shrugged.
"Tell me. Otherwise, put on something more decent. It's obviously cold on that side."
Both eyebrows raised as the man put his hands against the stone columns and sneered at him.
That one was below the belt.
Did you just make a joke?
Max couldn't hide the small grin that formed, not because of how the crazed man was acting but how his skill was starting to reveal more than just simple instructions or information.
"You… you…"
For a moment Max would have bet his captor was beginning to foam at the mouth as spittle flew each time he sputtered.
Those silver eyes shook with rage.
The man took quick, ragged breaths, his face redder than any apple Max had seen in a while.
Suddenly he stopped his temper tantrum and then began to howl with laughter.

Tears began to appear from how hard he was seemingly enjoying the moment. Each breath of air returned as a giggle, then a cackle or occasionally a loud howl.
Did he break?
No… he is… changing. Do you see his stature?
Max began to see what his skill was talking about. Ever since he had first seen the man, there was a slight hunch of his shoulders. After he appeared and was wearing that horrible sheer outfit, he stood cocked to the side.
Now the man was almost upright, appearing confident even amidst the laughter.
His captor's outfit changed to simple leather armor in a heartbeat. It was a muted brown, nothing that would stand out in a crowd of people on the street. Even the knives that were set in sheaths on a leather strap across his chest looked simple.
"You are a troublesome pest."
His voice…
It has changed. He has changed.
"Max Hoste, it has been a long time since I have had someone of your caliber to play with. I am impressed with how you dealt with the others. Most would not have withstood their childish attempts for as long as you did, but the constant jabs were too much for their fragile egos."
He cracked his neck, rotated his shoulders, and then smirked.
"I believe it may be more fun to see what is possible than to simply end you, and yes, I can easily end you."
Those silver eyes began to glow, and a purple ring formed around the silver side, making holding the man's gaze difficult at best.
"Who are you?"
"Who am I? As in my real name or what I go by?"
"Are you too afraid to tell me your real name?" Max replied.
Shaking his head, still smirking as he leaned against the stone columns, his captor sighed.
"I'm not going to be taunted like the others. The truth is I'm bored when someone hasn't hired me. You have been one of three targets that I have been paid for that didn't die on my first attempt."
Max watched as his captor suddenly burst into laughter, this time his voice sounding like it was filled with pure delight.
A wave of power assaulted Max, and he stood up, taking a step back and sending his chair clattering to the floor.
Even though his eyes couldn't see it, his Sonar could detect the waves like heat from a bonfire.

He is revealing his true self. Whatever he is, whoever he is, this has all been part of his plan. Forgive me Max. I didn't recognize what we are facing.
What is that?
Someone who has most likely defeated the tower.
The smirk never left his captor's face as he watched Max wince. He snorted once and shook his head.
"It appears you can somehow stand and not fall as most would. That is a very rare thing indeed… I know you have a black skill, and what I have learned about them is… dangerous. Just how dangerous are you, Max Hoste?"
"To you?"
"You're no threat to me… not yet, and I doubt for some time. You still haven't finished even half the tower, and that means you're nothing more than a toy to play with."
The man leaned his face forward, pressing his head between the stone blocks, letting it pull his facial skin back some as he gave the most sinister grin Max had ever seen.
"My toy to play with."
Everything changed so fast even his mind and body couldn't react. One moment they had been standing there, separated by the walls and distance, the next he was bound by the very stones that had caged him.
A stone wall was pressed against his back, and both arms were encircled with stone twice, once on the wrist the other right after the elbow.
Somehow, they had been lifted, stretched out like a scarecrow. His legs were bound at his ankle and above the knee.
Panic set in when Max realized that all the hope he had once had for escaping or defeating this man was gone.
Compared to his captor, he was powerless.

2 Chapter 276

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1886503/chapter-276 2024-11-06

The two purple, grape-colored portals sandwiched him, and before he could take a breath, Max found himself standing on a four-by-four-foot platform.
His eyes focused almost immediately, and glancing around, he saw a pool of lava that stretched for over a hundred yards in every direction. He was in some dome, carved out inside a mountainside from the way the rocks looked, and off to his left was a small ledge with a single door.
"Let's see what you can do!"
The voice of his captor echoed through the area, and Max didn't see the man anywhere.

Thoughts?
Silence was his answer, and for a moment a fear of being alone came over him.
We're ten feet above the lava. The ceiling is fifty yards above us at its highest peak. Based on the distance to the door and the amount of space we have around us, we can make it, but we'll have to reveal one of our spells. Two would be easier, but for now I think we need to continue to hide what we can do.
Use your stone wall. Summon it on the platform, pick it up, and toss it about one third of the way when I tell you to. While you do that, summon a boulder, aim it for the other third, and time your running.
The stone wall shouldn't sink that fast, but you won't have a lot of time to waste.
Anything else?
Get dressed.
Chuckling, Max wanted to reply but knew his skill was right. He was going to need every ounce of power he had from his equipment to pull this off.
[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-Old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 406/1000
Tower Experience: 40.00%
HP: 18,680/18,680
MP: 6340/6340
Stamina: 4670/4670
STR: 900
DEX: 942
CON: 934
INT: 634
WIS: 634
Defense of the Dragon - 20.0%
Defense of the Demon - 20.0%
Demon Essence: - 293
Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase
Merfolk King's Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement
Sand Worm's Skin Chest - 10 STR/CON + 10% Magic Resist +20% Crushing Damage
Cubed Bracers - 25 STR/DEX/CON
Belt of the Golem - 4 STR/CON +25% Damage Decrease Slashing/Piercing
Scout Spider Helm - 5 STR/DEX/CON Invisible State, Grants Minor Poison Resist
Cloak of Spider - 5 Dex. Spider Walk - 5 Mins / 24 Hour Cooldown
Green Ring - 1 DEX
Black Rabbit Ring - 2 DEX
Ring of the Golem Prince - 4 CON +25% Magic Resist
Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase
Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase
Bracelet of Sand Worm - 10 STR/CON Minor Acid Resist
Bonded Heart - 50 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS -
20% Mana Regen 10% Spell Potency
Tentacle Ring - 40 STR/DEX/CON
Ring of Casting - 40 INT/WIS 10% Spell Casting Speed
Conqueror of the Broken Prince -
40 STR/DEX/CON +30% Damage Larger Enemies, Cleaving
Legendary Free Bow - 100 DEX 50 CON
*****
Remind me how we got caught?
I wasn't paying attention… I'm guessing you want me to put on an act?

Yes. You could easily span this gap with just the stone wall, but that would show your potential. Revealing you are capable of casting is far better than giving up the information about your stats. And you look silly holding a bow and a halberd, but I understand why.
Putting away both for a second, Max summoned the stone wall on the platform and snapped it off from the side, holding the large fifteen-yard section of rock in his hands.
Toss it and start summoning your boulder, and jump a second after the wall lands.
His throwing skill told him exactly where it needed to go, and with a small flick that he made look harder, it soared about thirty-five yards.
Max was moving, knowing when it would hit, jumping from the platform and controlling his body with ease. The boulder he had forming ahead of him was pushed farther as he moved, and when he landed on the stone wall that sent out a shower of lava, he took another two steps and jumped again.
His feet touched down on the ball of stone, and one step was all it took to propel himself the remainder of the distance, landing on the small rocky ledge near the closed door.
Laughter echoed through the cavern, and the simple wooden door vanished as he got close to it. In its place was now a pulsing green portal.
“Impressive, Max. A warrior with the ability to cast spells. Tell me what all can your black skill do?”
“Does this take me back to my cell? If not, I’m going to be honest, I’d rather it did,” Max replied.
No reply came, and seconds turned into a minute.
“Seriously? I can pull out my chair again.”
Storing his bow, Max’s simple chair appeared, but before it touched the ground, an angry voice boomed across the cave.
“Who do you think you are?! Do you not realize I can kill you at any moment I desire?!”
Smacking his lips, Max sighed and put his chair down and plopped down on it.
“Can you? I mean if you could, why don’t you? I’m guessing that was your poison that failed. From what I heard it isn’t cheap.”
Is the room shaking?
No… it’s your captor’s presence. They are angry, and it is bleeding over whatever they have control over here.
Where is here?
I am not certain.
Another minute passed, and with no response, Max took out a book and began to read, ignoring the portal not far behind him.
His senses were focused everywhere his Sonar skill reached, and his body was ready to move.
Frustration had eaten at him for the first few days. Being distracted and thinking he was finally safe had led to him getting caught. He hadn’t been sure if his captor had been waiting, watching and preparing for a moment when his guard was down.
Pages turned, and soon a third of his book had been read through, when he sensed the portal above and below him.
Don’t!
Max fought the urge of trying to dodge the two purple portals that once again were at his feet and head, sending him wherever this crazy person wanted.
His arm moved, and he grabbed his chair which was tipping over, landing on his feet as he found himself in the cell once more.
The walls hadn’t changed since he had been taken from the room. The vertical columns, which allowed him to see another room surrounding his, remained. Slowly turning, Max saw that his captor had not returned.
Do you have any idea of the spell or ability he is using? Thoughts on the cooldown?

There are lots of spells and abilities that allow one to move between their own world and others. Ones that permit travel between worlds are very demanding and often have either a long cooldown or cost enormous amounts of power. You might be correct in your assumption. He couldn't move you so quickly back here…
Setting his chair down in the middle of the room once more, Max opened his book and read, waiting for the silver eyed individual to return.
***
"You vex me!"
The sudden outburst caught Max off guard. His captor was a man, which he had determined after the silver eyed man showed up in a sheer, see-through outfit about twenty minutes ago. He hadn't said a word, simply standing there in that god-awful outfit.
"Sounds like your problem. You brought me here, remember?"
"Do you even know why?! Do you understand what you represent?!"
Glancing up for a moment, he held the man's gaze and shrugged.
"Tell me. Otherwise, put on something more decent. It's obviously cold on that side."
Both eyebrows raised as the man put his hands against the stone columns and sneered at him.
That one was below the belt.
Did you just make a joke?
Max couldn't hide the small grin that formed, not because of how the crazed man was acting but how his skill was starting to reveal more than just simple instructions or information.
"You… you…"
For a moment Max would have bet his captor was beginning to foam at the mouth as spittle flew each time he sputtered.
Those silver eyes shook with rage.
The man took quick, ragged breaths, his face redder than any apple Max had seen in a while.
Suddenly he stopped his temper tantrum and then began to howl with laughter.
Tears began to appear from how hard he was seemingly enjoying the moment. Each breath of air returned as a giggle, then a cackle or occasionally a loud howl.
Did he break?
No… he is… changing. Do you see his stature?
Max began to see what his skill was talking about. Ever since he had first seen the man, there was a slight hunch of his shoulders.
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Now the man was almost upright, appearing confident even amidst the laughter.
His captor's outfit changed to simple leather armor in a heartbeat. It was a muted brown, nothing that would stand out in a crowd of people on the street. Even the knives that were set in sheaths on a leather strap across his chest looked simple.
"You are a troublesome pest."
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"Who are you?"
"Who am I? As in my real name or what I go by?"

“Are you too afraid to tell me your real name?” Max replied.
Shaking his head, still smirking as he leaned against the stone columns, his captor sighed.
“I’m not going to be taunted like the others. The truth is I’m bored when someone hasn’t hired me. You have been one of three targets that I have been paid for that didn’t die on my first attempt.”
Max watched as his captor suddenly burst into laughter, this time his voice sounding like it was filled with pure delight.
A wave of power assaulted Max, and he stood up, taking a step back and sending his chair clattering to the floor.
Even though his eyes couldn’t see it, his Sonar could detect the waves like heat from a bonfire.
He is revealing his true self. Whatever he is, whoever he is, this has all been part of his plan. Forgive me Max. I didn’t recognize what we are facing.
What is that?
Someone who has most likely defeated the tower.
The smirk never left his captor’s face as he watched Max wince. He snorted once and shook his head.
“It appears you can somehow stand and not fall as most would. That is a very rare thing indeed… I know you have a black skill, and what I have learned about them is… dangerous. Just how dangerous are you, Max Hoste?”
“To you?”
“You’re no threat to me… not yet, and I doubt for some time. You still haven’t finished even half the tower, and that means you’re nothing more than a toy to play with.”
The man leaned his face forward, pressing his head between the stone blocks, letting it pull his facial skin back some as he gave the most sinister grin Max had ever seen.
“My toy to play with.”
Everything changed so fast even his mind and body couldn’t react.
One moment they had been standing there, separated by the walls and distance, the next he was bound by the very stones that had caged him.
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Somehow, they had been lifted, stretched out like a scarecrow.
His legs were bound at his ankle and above the knee.
Panic set in when Max realized that all the hope he had once had for escaping or defeating this man was gone.
Compared to his captor, he was powerless.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

November write a thon is a special time for me now. Recently one of the authors I have gotten to know and learn threw their hat in this ring and I just want to show them a little love.

Check out their story!

Reborn as a Xianxia fatty, watch as an anti-social computer Scientist leverages his tech skills to survive despite his trash cultivation talent.

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/97091/data-driven-daoist-xianxia-litrpg-progression]

PAT 3 277 https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-113752869 2024-10-23

The empty floor that had separated them was still there, and his captor had that same grin as before. Like a wild animal coming to devour an animal, stuck in a bush or unable to move.

His silver eyes were locked on Max, sparkling as he drew close.

“Tell me, Max. Do you want to play a game?”

As he started to open his mouth, a thin stone band gagged him.

Tsking his tongue, the silver eyed man shook his head.

“Wait… just wait. I’m only going to give you one chance, and I would hate for the wrong answer.”

A collar appeared in his hand, and the man began to spin the silver band around like a ball.

“I can kill you right now. There are countless ways, and I won’t lie, I might take months doing it, just to see how close to death I can get you. Even if you didn’t break then, I might keep going, healing you each time, seeing how many years it might take before you finally succumbed.”

Max’s eyes were bulging, and inside him his skill felt like an animal. It was angry and ready to lash out, but both knew right now there wasn’t a chance they could win. Not even if he could use every skill he had.

“Or I shall put this collar on you and set you free in my world. I’ll give you a week to try to…” He paused, tapping the silver band against his chin as he looked at the ceiling. “Escape? I mean it’s not possible, but at least you can believe until I catch you that it is.”

His captor was now just a few feet away, and he leaned over, tapping the silver band against Max’s bald head.

The sound of metal on metal surprised the man, who began to laugh.

“A helmet! With a built-in ability to hide itself! I love it!”

Howling, he turned around in a circle, seeming lost in his own thoughts.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll let you keep two pieces of armor and one… no, two pieces of jewelry. No weapons, though… That would be too easy.”

The man was looking him up and down, studying Max.

“You’ll have a seven-day head start. You can use those items, and everything else I’ll lock inside your storage. Attempt to take anything out and…”

His captor made a face and shook like he was being hit by lightning.

“It won’t be pleasant. Perhaps you can escape, even though no one else ever has. Regardless, I’ll busy myself with something else and return, trying to find out where you have gone. I’ll give you one chance to answer. No questions, or that option will be gone.”

He leaned forward, so close that his breath could be smelled, the scent of something sweet reaching Max’s nostrils.

“Do you want to die or hope to escape?”

Take the chance. We can find a way.

The band vanished, and Max closed his mouth, getting some saliva to remove the dry-mouth feeling.

“I’ll escape.”

His captor laughed, splattering spit upon his face as he did.

“Oh I do love a strong spirit. So much better when I get to break it. Very well, let’s see how this goes.”

He lifted the silver collar to Max’s neck, and it began to separate, and then the cold metal touched his throat.

Like a snake constricting around its prey, the metal circle squeezed for a few seconds around his entire neck before loosening slightly.

“Ahh, that’s the perfect fit. Now, for the real fun. Ten seconds. No more, no less. Take everything off, store it, and then only the two

pieces of armor and jewelry you desire may be worn. Everything else must stay in storage. And remember…”

Once more the man’s face came close, those silver eyes trying to peer into his soul.

“Do not believe for a moment I won’t make you suffer if you break any of my rules.”

Max nodded as best he could.

“Good, decide now!”

Ten fingers were held up before him and then one was lowered.

Boots, pants, growth ring, and boss band! Now!

Seven seconds remained, and Max knew his skill was right. He needed stats, and those were his best items for it.

In an instant, everything vanished except his God Walkers, the Merfolk King’s Gift, the Ring of Growth, and the Black Boss Band.

“Three seconds left. Impressive! Now for the next part.”

The man pulled something out for a moment as he turned.

Horrible pain lanced through his body where the necklace of storage was.

Turning around, his captor frowned, moving to where the necklace was and tugged. It wouldn’t budge an inch.

“That many… so many I can’t even take your storage necklace.”

He scratched his chin, studying Max as he took a step back.

“You are quite a specimen I will say… such muscles and so toned. I can see why that elf likes to look at you how she does.”

Rage filled Max, and if he could have broken free, even the power difference between them wouldn't have mattered.

Calm down! He is riling you for a reason!

Taking a slow breath in and letting it out, Max said nothing.

Snorting, the man turned back around, frowning as he did.

Another wave of pain hit Max, and a burning sensation from his storage necklace grew. A few seconds later it went away.

“Very well, I have sealed your storage. You won’t be able to access it as I mentioned before. I had hoped to take it, perusing whatever I might find, but that will have to wait till later after I find you.”

Snapping his fingers, everything shifted, and Max felt the portal above and below appear.

Rich, earthy, and humid air reached his nose.

The sounds of animals and the moving of tree branches filled his ears.

As his eyes focused, the bright light that came through the canopy above felt amazing on his skin.

A jungle… similar to the ape one and some of the others.

Max lifted his hand and realized that he wasn’t bound. Next to him was his captor, and when he turned, crouching some and holding up his fist, the silver-eyed man laughed, shaking his head as he rolled his eyes.

“Seriously? You really want to attempt that?”

The disdain for Max’s action was evident in the tone of his voice.

“Habit,” Max said as he stood, watching his captor as the man shrugged, both hands clasped behind his back.

“Either way, it doesn’t matter. Seven days, Max Hoste. Try to impress me. Find a way to hide and survive. Know that what is out here… it is strong. It is deadly.”

The man bent down, dragging his fingers in the dark brown soil. It was soft, and ferns grew everywhere but the small clearing they were standing in.

Thick trees, thin trees, and everything in between were all jammed in tightly around each other.

Insects started to buzz around, some coming and landing upon Max's skin.

A few stung him, shocking Max, as nothing had been able to do that in so long back home.

They can pierce my skin?

This isn't our world, and the feel of it is much stronger. We need to be careful.

His captor stood up, a small map drawn in the soil.

"I'm going to leave. One last gift, though, before I go."

A single water skin appeared in his captor's hand and was tossed to Max.

"That's worth more than you know. I don't want you dying of dehydration, and even you, as strong as I can tell you are, know eventually water will be your downfall. Enjoy the map and the gift."

A purple portal appeared next to the man, and as he stepped halfway into it, he stopped and looked back at Max with that same malicious grin.

"Make this hunt interesting. Maybe if you do, I'll give you another chance with a few more days."

With those words, he vanished in the portal as it disappeared.

Glancing at the sketch, Max and his skill studied it for a moment.

A never-ending forest… mountains… a desert, and a… gorge?

Those are not good things for us. Mountains often house dangerous creatures, and without a solid weapon we are going to be in trouble.

Max was already moving, working to rectify that as he went to a tree about fifteen feet high and grasped the six-inch-thick trunk.

He tugged on it, expecting it to come right up and was surprised when it didn't rip free.

"What in the gods?!"

Quiet. Try again.

Getting a better grip and using his feet and hips, Max pulled with everything, and this time the roots began to break, tearing and snapping off as it finally came free from the ground.

It felt heavier than Max thought it should.

[Status Check]

*****

Max Hoste

18-Year-Old Human Male

Level 1

Exp 406/1000

Tower Experience: 40.00%

HP: 13,920/13,920

MP: 5440/5440

Stamina: 3480/3480

STR: 696

DEX: 674

CON: 696

INT: 544

WIS: 544

Defense of the Dragon - 20.0%

Defense of the Demon - 20.0%

Demon Essence: - 293

Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase

Merfolk King’s Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement

Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase

Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase

*****

I am so weak…

You are not weak, just weaker than what you are used to.

Max couldn’t help but stare at the numbers. In a moment he had been stripped of almost a fourth of his stats.

Items are important. I realize that even more right now, but what if I didn’t have you? I wouldn’t have the stats I do.

You would be dead… or baking. Either way, we need to move. Pick a direction and go. Don’t worry about a trail for now. Something tells me we won’t be able to hide it, and the time spent trying isn’t worth it. For now put distance between us and this spot. I’m not certain of the game, but I would expect our hunter to play by rules he didn’t share completely. He enjoys the hunt, and we are something he hasn’t faced before. That challenge will drive him mad with excitement.

Glancing down at the crude drawing once more, Max wished he had a coin to flip.

Choose and move. Something is getting closer—the birds are getting quieter.

Snapping off a branch, he tossed it into the air, spinning as it went upward. When it landed it pointed in the direction of the desert.

I guess I'll trust the gods on this path.

Hefting his tree onto his shoulder, Max began to jog, dodging trees as he went. His skill was right. Each step crushed a plant of some kind, and his feet left indentions in the soft soil.

I'm going to focus on this metal object around your neck. I'm not certain I can do anything about it, but I'll try.

Saying nothing, Max simply kept moving, running through the forest as quickly as he could, his Sonar skill struggling to keep up with the speed at which he moved.

***

Two miles later, a loud roar from behind him announced that something was definitely on his tail. Each time the creature roared, the jungle would go silent for a moment before coming to life, loud trills and shrieks coming from the trees and overhead. Other animals or monsters answered from different directions, and Max began to slow, not wanting to find himself running into a pair of whatever he might face.

He started tearing off the fronds at the top of his tree, trying to make his weapon a little faster and possibly pokier.

Within thirty seconds the sound of trees breaking reached him, and the plodding of something heavy could be heard.

Shite! What are we about to face?

No reply came, and for the first time in so long, Max felt alone when his skill hadn't replied.

Setting his feet, Max lowered himself, crouched near one of the bigger trunks of a tree and waited for whatever was coming.

3 Chapter 277

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1888347/chapter-277 2024-11-11

The empty floor that had separated them was still there, and his captor had that same grin as before. Like a wild animal coming to devour an animal, stuck in a bush or unable to move.
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“Tell me, Max. Do you want to play a game?”
As he started to open his mouth, a thin stone band gagged him.
Tsking his tongue, the silver eyed man shook his head.
“Wait… just wait. I’m only going to give you one chance, and I would hate for the wrong answer.”
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“I’ll escape.”
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Like a snake constricting around its prey, the metal circle squeezed for a few seconds around his entire neck before loosening slightly.
“Ahh, that’s the perfect fit. Now, for the real fun. Ten seconds. No more, no less. Take everything off, store it, and then only the two pieces of armor and jewelry you desire may be worn. Everything else must stay in storage. And remember…”
Once more the man’s face came close, those silver eyes trying to peer into his soul.
“Do not believe for a moment I won’t make you suffer if you break any of my rules.”
Max nodded as best he could.
“Good, decide now!”
Ten fingers were held up before him and then one was lowered.
Boots, pants, growth ring, and boss band! Now!

Seven seconds remained, and Max knew his skill was right. He needed stats, and those were his best items for it.
In an instant, everything vanished except his God Walkers, the Merfolk King’s Gift, the Ring of Growth, and the Black Boss Band.
“Three seconds left. Impressive! Now for the next part.”
The man pulled something out for a moment as he turned.
Horrible pain lanced through his body where the necklace of storage was.
Turning around, his captor frowned, moving to where the necklace was and tugged. It wouldn’t budge an inch.
“That many… so many I can’t even take your storage necklace.”
He scratched his chin, studying Max as he took a step back.
“You are quite a specimen I will say… such muscles and so toned. I can see why that elf likes to look at you how she does.”
Rage filled Max, and if he could have broken free, even the power difference between them wouldn't have mattered.
Calm down! He is riling you for a reason!
Taking a slow breath in and letting it out, Max said nothing.
Snorting, the man turned back around, frowning as he did.
Another wave of pain hit Max, and a burning sensation from his storage necklace grew. A few seconds later it went away.
“Very well, I have sealed your storage. You won’t be able to access it as I mentioned before. I had hoped to take it, perusing whatever I might find, but that will have to wait till later after I find you.”
Snapping his fingers, everything shifted, and Max felt the portal above and below appear.
Rich, earthy, and humid air reached his nose.
The sounds of animals and the moving of tree branches filled his ears.
As his eyes focused, the bright light that came through the canopy above felt amazing on his skin.
A jungle… similar to the ape one and some of the others.
Max lifted his hand and realized that he wasn’t bound. Next to him was his captor, and when he turned, crouching some and holding up his fist, the silver-eyed man laughed, shaking his head as he rolled his eyes.
“Seriously? You really want to attempt that?”
The disdain for Max’s action was evident in the tone of his voice.
“Habit,” Max said as he stood, watching his captor as the man shrugged, both hands clasped behind his back.
“Either way, it doesn’t matter. Seven days, Max Hoste. Try to impress me. Find a way to hide and survive. Know that what is out here… it is strong. It is deadly.”
The man bent down, dragging his fingers in the dark brown soil. It was soft, and ferns grew everywhere but the small clearing they were standing in.
Thick trees, thin trees, and everything in between were all jammed in tightly around each other.
Insects started to buzz around, some coming and landing upon Max’s skin.
A few stung him, shocking Max, as nothing had been able to do that in so long back home.
They can pierce my skin?
This isn’t our world, and the feel of it is much stronger. We need to be careful.
His captor stood up, a small map drawn in the soil.
“I’m going to leave. One last gift, though, before I go.”
A single water skin appeared in his captor’s hand and was tossed to Max.
“That’s worth more than you know. I don’t want you dying of dehydration, and even you, as strong as I can tell you are, know eventually water will be your downfall. Enjoy the map and the gift.”
A purple portal appeared next to the man, and as he stepped halfway into it, he stopped and looked back at Max with that same malicious grin.

“Make this hunt interesting. Maybe if you do, I’ll give you another chance with a few more days.”
With those words, he vanished in the portal as it disappeared.
Glancing at the sketch, Max and his skill studied it for a moment.
A never-ending forest… mountains… a desert, and a… gorge?
Those are not good things for us. Mountains often house dangerous creatures, and without a solid weapon we are going to be in trouble.
Max was already moving, working to rectify that as he went to a tree about fifteen feet high and grasped the six-inch-thick trunk.
He tugged on it, expecting it to come right up and was surprised when it didn’t rip free.
“What in the gods?!”
Quiet. Try again.
Getting a better grip and using his feet and hips, Max pulled with everything, and this time the roots began to break, tearing and snapping off as it finally came free from the ground.
It felt heavier than Max thought it should.
[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-Old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 406/1000
Tower Experience: 40.00%
HP: 13,920/13,920
MP: 5440/5440
Stamina: 3480/3480
STR: 696
DEX: 674
CON: 696
INT: 544
WIS: 544
Defense of the Dragon - 20.0%
Defense of the Demon - 20.0%
Demon Essence: - 293
Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase
Merfolk King’s Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement
Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase
Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase
*****
I am so weak…
You are not weak, just weaker than what you are used to.
Max couldn’t help but stare at the numbers. In a moment he had been stripped of almost a fourth of his stats.
Items are important. I realize that even more right now, but what if I didn’t have you? I wouldn’t have the stats I do.
You would be dead… or baking. Either way, we need to move. Pick a direction and go. Don’t worry about a trail for now. Something tells me we won’t be able to hide it, and the time spent trying isn’t worth it. For now put distance between us and this spot. I’m not certain of the game, but I would expect our hunter to play by rules he didn’t share completely. He enjoys the hunt, and we are something he hasn’t faced before. That challenge will drive him mad with excitement.
Glancing down at the crude drawing once more, Max wished he had a coin to flip.
Choose and move. Something is getting closer—the birds are getting quieter.

Snapping off a branch, he tossed it into the air, spinning as it went upward. When it landed it pointed in the direction of the desert.
I guess I'll trust the gods on this path.
Hefting his tree onto his shoulder, Max began to jog, dodging trees as he went. His skill was right. Each step crushed a plant of some kind, and his feet left indentions in the soft soil.
I'm going to focus on this metal object around your neck. I'm not certain I can do anything about it, but I'll try.
Saying nothing, Max simply kept moving, running through the forest as quickly as he could, his Sonar skill struggling to keep up with the speed at which he moved.
***
Two miles later, a loud roar from behind him announced that something was definitely on his tail. Each time the creature roared, the jungle would go silent for a moment before coming to life, loud trills and shrieks coming from the trees and overhead. Other animals or monsters answered from different directions, and Max began to slow, not wanting to find himself running into a pair of whatever he might face.
He started tearing off the fronds at the top of his tree, trying to make his weapon a little faster and possibly pokier.
Within thirty seconds the sound of trees breaking reached him, and the plodding of something heavy could be heard.
Shite! What are we about to face?
No reply came, and for the first time in so long, Max felt alone when his skill hadn't replied.
Setting his feet, Max lowered himself, crouched near one of the bigger trunks of a tree and waited for whatever was coming.

PAT 4 278 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 278**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-113752873 2024-10-24

Chapter 278

Another roar came as a shape appeared through the trees.

Max saw the head first, reaching forward as its body shoulder-checked smaller trees, ripping them from the ground.

A dinosaur?

He knew the creature from the stories of ancient times, and this one looked like one of the apex predators in the books they had studied as kids.

Thirty-plus feet of solid muscle and thick hide was barreling toward him, a gaping maw filled with teeth as two large eyes locked on to him.

"Ogre shite," Max cursed as he shifted his feet into the soil.

Digging the tree into the ground, he set it like a lance, hoping the creature might impale itself on it from the charge.

Tiny arms with claws looked comically out of place on the beast’s chest as the thick and powerful legs strode through the trees.

On open terrain this thing would be a lot faster…

Not having a weapon, Max knew his options to win against something like this would have to depend on his own abilities and not the tree he hadn’t tested yet. In hindsight, he should have swung at a different tree at some point, testing how strong the wood really was.

The beast came within his Sonar range and in four strides was almost on top of him, head bent down, mouth spread wide, preparing to bite both Max and the tree.

Already, a large spear of ice was hovering in midair behind him, waiting for the moment as he poured mana into the spell, letting it grow in size.

[Demonic Teleportation]

As the dinosaur’s teeth chomped on the wooden spike he had tried to set, snapping it in half, Max appeared above it, aiming for the spinal cord on its neck.

Thick skulls… be smart!

[Power Strike]

[Weakness]

[Festering Touch]

His fist hit the creature's neck as the dinosaur began to rise from its bite, tiny hand meeting thick hide.

A crack came, and Max felt his own hand shatter upon impact.

[Regeneration]

At the same time the ice spear shot toward the lizard, piercing its throat.

When it opened its mouth to roar, pieces of wood and blood came out as Max grabbed onto the small hole he had created with his punch with his left hand.

It was barely wide enough to get his whole hand in, but it gave him a place to hold on to while the dinosaur flung itself around.

Bones popped, and his skin started to cover the twisted lump of flesh that once been his right hand.

The dinosaur flashed red, turned its head toward Max, and tried to bite the piece of flesh hanging on to the open wound.

It turned and twisted, slamming into trees, moving faster as its mouth opened and closed with blazing speed.

Max held on for dear life, feeling like one of those performers who held onto bucking animals.

Another ice spear began to form as he waited out this ability, counting the seconds till almost twenty seconds had passed and the dinosaur flashed red again, slowing down and letting out another roar.

More blood was spewed across the trees and dark soil, as the beast tried to attack again.

When it did, Max sent the spear of ice at his next target, striking the right eye.

Thankfully his right hand had finally healed, and he was able to now get a grip and squeeze his legs around the thick neck as the dinosaur began to thrash, roaring as it lifted its head upward, blood squirting from the eye Max had just taken out.

Grunting, he began to try to tear apart the hole with both hands, feeling the hide fight him as both sets of fingers were thrust deeper.

For what felt like days but was only eight or nine seconds, the sound of tearing could be heard over the wailing of the beast.

Its hide began to part, and the hole grew wider. Each inch seemed to upset the beast, and it started slamming its body against a thick tree, trying to rub Max off.

Moving quickly to the other side, Max continued his assault, widening the hole until he could get both hands in it. He forced his arms in, where they slid along the hide, between the muscle and protective layer.

Smiling, Max began to pour mana into his hands.

Flames grew around them, and the dinosaur began to run through the jungle, smashing into every tree it could, trying to shake the pest it had picked up.

Max poured more mana into the spell as he moved from side to side, trusting his Sonar to tell him which way to move as the beast tried to dislodge him.

Finally with the power built up, Max unleashed it, and the spell erupted under the skin.

A gout of flame erupted from the hole as flesh and hide was burned, and the dinosaur stumbled, crashing forward into the dirt and forcing Max to jump clear of the twisting and turning body.

The scent of moist soil mixed with burnt flesh and meat.

A pitiful whine came from the creature as it lay on its side, unable to stand as Max’s spell had done what he had hoped.

Its spine had been severed, with a focused fire attack directed downward at the bones not far beneath Max’s hands.

Moving to where the dinosaur lay, Max heard the sounds of more roars and cries coming from different parts of the jungle.

Blood… they have to be responding to the blood.

Summoning another ice spear, he moved to where the beast was, lining the attack up as the dinosaur tried to snap a few more times, its jaw collecting dirt each time it did.

Unable to lift its head, it was stuck and soon would be food for whatever came to claim its corpse.

The spear penetrated the damaged eye socket, sliding through the hole in the skull and then reached the place Max had hoped it would.

Cold power filled him as the creature shuddered and stopped moving.

[10 Strength Consumed]

[10 Constitution Consumed]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill does not match being’s body type]

[Consume is adjusting skill]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Berserker - Rare has been upgraded to Berserker - Epic]

As he read that notification, the skill he had come to know and love became stronger.

The sound of the jungle broke Max from his shock, and he took off running in the direction he had originally set out, trying to put distance between him and that corpse.

For a full ten minutes he ran, blazing a path through bushes, surprising different creatures as he flew past them.

Without that tree this is much faster, and honestly I don’t think it would have done anything to that dinosaur.

Slowing down, Max started to walk, making sure he was aware of what surrounded him. Twice he had almost run into another fight, but his appearance had shocked the large cat and whatever the other thing had been, both racing up a tree as he moved by them.

[Skill Description - Berserker]

*****

Berserker - Epic Skill: When activated, your strength and attack speed will triple for twenty seconds, but you will be consumed by a controlled rage. If the target is killed before the effect ends, the duration will reset, and the closest enemy will be chosen as the new

target. There is no limit to the number of times the duration can be reset. May only be activated once every twelve hours.

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“Holy elf tits!”

Cursing, Max winced at the words, realizing how much he missed Fowl and the others.

Seeing the fact that now the strength was tripled and lasted longer as well as having a shorter cooldown, the pain of being alone was lessened.

Glancing upward, Max tried to determine how much time was left in the day but didn’t have a clue.

Jogging, he set off, unsure what he was going to find.

***

His fist ached, and no damage had been done to the snake that was only slightly slower than he was.

Without Sonar he would have been caught as the snake fell from the branches overhead.

It was over a hundred feet long and easily six feet wide, yet it coiled and moved with a speed that was surprisingly fast.

Its hide changed colors, morphing based on what it was against, blending in to the tree one section was wrapped around, as well as the dirt for the parts that slithered along it.

Jumping back, and darting between an opening of its coils, Max avoided the strike that came from the open mouth, following his movement as if a string was tied to him.

Green liquid dripped from the fangs longer than his arm.

At least my Poison Resist should help if I do get bit.

Another strike came as the snake reset for a second, changing directions and coming around after coils created a wall to block Max.

Fire had bounced off its hide, and ice had barely scratched it. The earth attacks had almost melted as the snake rubbed against the spikes.

Lightning crackled and arced from the spell he was forming above. He hoped that something might finally work on this snake.

He was barely staying ahead, and while Max had considered running, the truth was, he couldn't run from every fight. Learning what he could do against these things was the only way he would survive in the long run.

A clearing was a little bit away, and Max sent his lightning ball at the snake, watching it race toward its armored body. The lightning struck the snake, causing the creature to jerk a few times, halting its pursuit.

Jogging toward it, he looked back, seeing what had to be one pissed off black snake, its purple eyes locked on him, a black tongue flicking from its mouth as it chased after him.

Max had spotted it a while ago through the slightly less dense trees and now hoped the clearing would work better at what he hoped to do.

It was covered with small ferns, and as he ran through them, insects went airborne, filling the air with shimmering wings as the light of the two suns reflected off them.

The snake came, coiling around the twenty-foot clearing, drawing all of its length into the space, winding itself around and around, gaining height as it slowly started to surround Max.

Grinning, Max stood still, poised and ready as he channeled a lightning bolt in his hands. Sparks arced between his hands growing thicker and brighter, absorbing more and more mana as he fed it.

No attack came as half a minute passed, that black tongue darting out of the snake's mouth as it watched Max.

He didn’t turn, didn’t follow its eyes, leaving himself open from behind.

His Sonar skill told Max everything he needed to know about the creature.

Closing his eyes, he waited, knowing what would come.

The snake passed his face once more, and Max could feel it speed up at seeing how Max had his eyes closed.

From behind it lunged, mouth open wide.

Spinning at the last moment Max reached out with both hands, grabbing the top and bottom of the snake’s jaw, unleashing all the power he had summoned of his lightning spell.

Convulsions started the moment his hands locked on to the flesh, the softer, not as armored inside of the mouth touching his thumb.

Mana continued to flow from him, feeding the spell that was surging through the snake.

It tried pulling back, tried closing its mouth but all it did was lift Max off the ground, unable to overcome the strength Max had.

Smoke started to rise through the plates of its skin, and its head began to glow as more lightning poured into the creature.

Black blood seeped from its nose and eyes as the tongue slapped against Max’s face and chest, leaving a trail of green that tingled.

[Poison Resisted]

Fighting back the laughter that he wanted to unleash, Max could tell the snake hoped this poison it had would do something, and yet it wasn’t strong enough to compete with the skill he had gained from the gorgon.

It tried to coil him up, but the electricity made its body not work right, and instead all it did was rub Max’s body against the rough armor, ripping off flesh and skin that was quickly replaced.

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Finally he couldn’t hold back.

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[10 Constitution Consumed]

[10 Dexterity Consumed]

Seven days… I need to get stronger as I run… whatever these creatures are, they're strong, but I'm stronger.

Chuckling, Max kept his senses peeled, looking for his next victim.

4 Chapter 278

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1890157/chapter-278 2024-11-11

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PAT 5 279 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 279**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/113752876 2024-10-25

Two days of nonstop fighting had him exhausted, and yet Max looked down at the newest corpse beneath him.
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“It was fun, but I don’t want you to suffer. I’m not an animal.”

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Glancing at the hole in the ground he sighed.
"Feels stupid, but I'm too tired."
Looking down into the darkness, he let his Sonar travel as far as possible. No noise or movement was detected.
Grunting, Max moved to the pile of items he had collected, grateful for the stomach he harvested from the gorilla. It smelled awful, but inside was a collection of bones, armored hides and other things he felt were worth keeping. When turned inside out it worked perfectly as a backpack.
Tossing a pair of mandibles he had ripped off into the stomach, Max set the growing sack on the ground.
His mouth was dry, and the lack of a waterskin had made him regret not going back to retrieve the waterskin he had been given.
Scouting out the caves and tunnels, Max found nothing inside but a maze of tunnels that led to different rooms with rotting parts of animals, plants, and things he had no idea about, all deathly still in the dark.
Retrieving his sack, Max pulled into the third room down a tunnel, slumped against the dirt wall, and closed his eyes.
You can talk… I know you're there.

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Without waiting more than a few seconds, Max gave in to his exhaustion, falling asleep immediately.
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Noise came through the tunnel. It sounded like something was sniffing.
The vibrations had woken Max up, and he was on his feet in a moment.
A fireball hovered above his hand, providing light, which showed the pile of rotting plants across the room he was in. Multiple piles were decomposing, the stench not even fazing him.
I'm sure I smell far worse than any goblin or ogre's arse…
Grabbing his sack, he slowly made his way to the opening, leaving the fireball hovering where he had summoned it.
Down the tunnel, away from the entrance was the sound he heard, and the ground was moving as something walked along it.
The sound of sniffing got louder, and Max's Sonar picked up the creature as it entered his range.
Long whiskers on a nose with some jagged and long teeth appeared in his mental image first, and as it got about a foot past the range of Sonar, the creature stopped.
Its nose began to twitch, and it shrieked loudly as it dashed through the tunnel in his direction.
A freaking giant mole!
Large paws with long claws came as the beast took up most of the space in the tunnel.
It was almost on him before Max could even get the fireball to where he was standing, the light of the flames causing the creature to backpedal, stopping its assault as it cried out.
A loud wave of sound came next, overwhelming Max's Sonar and ears, making his head feel like it was going to explode.
Blood ran down from his ears, nose, and eyes as the sound continued for a good twenty seconds.
Staggering backward, Max stumbled into the dirt wall, moving around the corner as he tried to breathe, his eyes aching and his mind hurting.
[Regeneration]
Immediately, relief started to come.
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Breathing hurt, as the strike had broken some ribs, but his ability was already working on healing them.

The mole slowly came into the room, its nose twitching as it sniffed the air.
Max’s mind finally started to clear, and his Sonar started to work again, going out from him and revealing the position of his newest foe.
I smell like rotten vegetation… it can't detect me!
Grateful for a break, Max breathed as slowly and quietly as possible, waiting for his body to heal.
Every few seconds the mole entered the room a little more, its nose never stopping as it shifted, trying to find him.
With the last bone back in place, Max picked up a rock that was near him and tossed it at the wall across the room.
The mole dashed toward the rock after it struck the wall, slamming into the dirt and bringing some of it down.
As it moved, Max summoned a fireball and moved away, pouring mana into it and letting it grow as he got as far as he could from the spell.
Another shriek came from the mole, and it turned, white, glossy eyes moving rapidly.
Once more it charged, plowing through the piles of rotting vegetation, and Max sent the fireball at the creature when it got close.
Flames erupted over its face, and it emitted another ear-piercing cry.
It howled and dug into the ground, burying its nose in the dirt.
Not giving the creature a chance to react, Max moved across the room in an instant, pulling the tooth from where he had tied it around his waist with some hide he had gathered, and driving it at the mole.
[Power Strike]
The tooth made a popping sound as it pierced the eyeball, allowing Max to drive it deeper into the mole’s skull until it twisted and jerked, dragging him downward and into the dirt.
Another loud, ear-splitting cry came from the monster as its claw swung at him, flashing with red glow and moving so fast he couldn’t react. It slammed into Max, who was pinned to the dirt.
Pain came as Max was sent rolling across the ground, knowing that his arm had been torn off at his elbow.
Blood poured out even as the Regeneration skill drew mana from him, flesh and bones starting to grow and reattach as he stood there.
Shite! This thing is way stronger than anything else I’ve fought! Smarter too!

He sensed the mole digging quickly, trying to escape downward into the soil, taking his ripped off forearm and the tooth he had used these last few days.
Three steps had him at the creature's furry body, half of its mass already hidden as it dug. He leaped at it, kicking with his boot, and the impact against the fur covered hide didn't do anything at all.
His Fire Nova would be ready to go off soon, and yet the mole was moving at an impossible speed into the dirt, sending piles upward into the room.
A small tail, only nine feet long, was twitching behind the animal as it dug, and Max ran to it, grabbing the dirt covered appendage with his left hand and held on.
[Bulwark]
His feet didn't move, and the mole found itself stuck, unable to dig deeper as Max stood there, smiling as the Fire Nova went off.
Waves of flames radiated from him, and the mole's exposed softer underbelly got a front row seat to the power coming off him.
It tugged harder, trying to free itself from Max's grasp, yet it couldn't get away as the second wave went off.
The scent of burnt fur and flesh filled the air, as well as the burning vegetation.
Combined, they made a horrible stench, but still none of that would remove his smile.
His right arm was almost fully repaired, his hand starting to take shape as fingers appeared.
Along the ground an ice spear was also coming to life. He poured as much mana as fast as he could, knowing that soon his ability would wear off and the mole would yank him from the position he now held.
A third wave of fire rolled out, and Max felt the tail go slack, as the mole began to back up.
With its haunches set up high, he turned quickly, sticking the tail over his shoulder, and sent the ice spell at the mole's exposed burnt belly.
It penetrated with ease, the protection that had been offered by the hide now burned away, and the six-foot-long piece of ice vanished as it disappeared inside.
Another ice spear began to form as soon as the first one was sent, but Max felt the change in how the mole was fighting.
The power and speed were gone, as it backed up slowly, almost as if it wasn't able to react as it wanted.
I know the tooth was out of poison… could the spear have hit something vital?

Taking steps forward, Max put all the power he had in his legs, letting his skill that had two seconds left keep him moving forward.
A tearing sound came as the tail was wrenched free from the base of the mole’s body, and Max sent the smaller ice spear at the creature before it could react.
Once more the spell buried itself inside.
Dropping the tail, Max opened and closed his right hand, glad to see that it was back to normal, and he summoned another ice spear, waiting to see what the mole was going to do.
Five seconds passed as the beast sat there, and Max let loose once more with the third ice spear.
All eight feet sank inside the already demolished underbelly, and six seconds later Max buckled to his knees as a coldness he hadn't felt in ages came.
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Smiling, Max started pulling the large corpse from the hole it had dug. He needed to retrieve the tooth and get out of here. At most he had a little over four days to get away, and there was no time to waste.

5 Chapter 279

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1891992/chapter-279 2024-11-11

Two days of nonstop fighting had him exhausted, and yet Max looked down at the newest corpse beneath him.
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PAT 6 280 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 280

https://www.patreon.com/collection/176837?view=expanded 2024-10-28

Nothing about the river looked safe.

The water moved quickly, a branch having been the test object, currents underneath sweeping it the moment it hit the water.

Max could sense creatures underneath the surface, some that had turned toward him as he approached the bank near the trees.

The river twisted and turned through the jungle, and he couldn’t see more than a quarter mile before it vanished around a bend. Even then the river was only about three hundred yards wide.

At least I don’t have to swim, but I really want to know what’s underneath.

Not being able to purify the water was his biggest problem, and as much as he trusted his poison immunity and his regeneration, it took a lot of effort not to have taken a drink yet.

Ten yards away, a creature waited in the mud, hidden by the brownish tinted liquid, yet Max could sense it. It had to be twenty feet long and felt like a crocodile from his world, only much bigger.

Pulling out the bone he had taken from the ape, Max held it in his right hand.

It was almost too thick for him to grip but it had resisted multiple strikes against trees and rocks. Proof that the constitution these creatures had were far beyond things from his world. Even the tower monsters didn’t have the fortitude these did, outside of perhaps some of the bosses, yet he had been weaker then.

I guess we’ll see how the water monsters play.

Using his left hand he scooped up a little water, taking a drink, his parched throat ignoring the taste of dirt.

Not even Everett’s best alcohol tastes better than this does right now.

Sighing, he took another, watching as the creature moved forward slowly, never disturbing the mud too much as it came straight toward him.

Its movement was deliberate, steady, and showed no fear.

He was in the animal’s territory—why should such a large beast be afraid of a single man?

Each drink sated his thirst even more, and Max stood up when the creature was about four yards out, its shape just starting to be visible to the naked eye if one knew where to look.

Grinning he took a step back and turned away.

Like an arrow fired from a bow, the beast shot out from its spot, leaping from the water and to the spot of land he had been standing on.

Max sensed it all and waited till its momentum provided it no way to dodge.

Spinning as he sidestepped, he swung the four-foot bone.

[Quick Attack]

[Power Strike]

It was the second time he had gotten to use this attack, and it was incredible. Even he could barely follow the movement of it. It made him understand why he hadn’t been able to activate any defensive skills when the mole had used it.

The twenty-four-foot-long crocodile took the full brunt of the attack against its eye socket, bones shattering from the power.

It had tried to turn its jaws, lined with teeth that looked sharp enough to tear Max in half, but the new skill was just too fast.

Now, the gray-skinned beast was knocked sideways and down from Max’s attack.

A grunting sound came from both the strike and the impact with the ground as it bounced, rolling through the ferns that decorated the river edge.

Before it had stopped rolling, Max was next to it, swinging over and over, striking the joints of its front legs, keeping an eye on the claws on its large feet.

Seven more strikes had landed, and before the crocodile had done anything but launch itself from the water, it lay dead, black blood staining the bone and the greenery.

Wiping his brow, Max smirked as he felt hair on his scalp.

I guess I can let it grow for a while.

Giving one more strike and making sure no attack came from a potential act of playing dead, Max moved to where the beast lay.

“What I wouldn’t give for a knife…”

The hide on it was tough, and it was one of the reasons Max had used the bone. Armor that stopped a dagger or sword was great but often found themselves suffering from a blunt attack.

Rolling the beast over, he opened its jaw, running his finger along some of the teeth and smiled.

Leaving the corpse there he moved to his stomach, turned backpack, and retrieved the tooth from the snake.

***

Holding the bottom jaw of the crocodile in his hands, Max couldn’t help but grin.

Using both hands he began to push on the two bones at the middle part of the *U* shaped section, squinting, as he wasn’t sure where it might break first.

Increasing the pressure he gave, it finally snapped on the left side, leaving a three-foot section of jaw with teeth lining it. The other piece was about two thirds of the remainder of the jaw, and dropping that piece, he went to work on the corpse.

It took some force for the teeth to saw through the dense section of hide at the top, but Max managed to finally break through, and once he could slip the bone saw into the hole, cutting became a much easier process.

Soon, a ten foot, very rough on the edges, section of hide had been rolled up, stuffed into the expanding backpack, and he was ready to keep moving.

Lifting up the corpse, Max tossed it into the water, watching it splash and begin to slowly sink.

About six seconds later the water erupted as other animals inside the watery domain moved to partake in his bloody offering.

The fight flowed downstream quickly as the current carried the meal away, and Max grabbed his bag, ran to the water, and quickly began running on top of it, moving upstream as he went.

So glad I kept these pants!

He could sense other animals moving under him, a few scattering at his presence as he moved, but a school of three-foot-long fish started chasing him, trying to catch up as he moved across.

Slowing down, he could sense their sharp teeth and something else inside their mouths.

A sucker?

Darting out occasionally was a long tube with small teeth on it.

Shuddering at the thought of fifty fish getting onto his flesh with those things, Max picked up his speed and continued running for another thirty minutes along the top of the water.

He passed multiple animals on the bank, each of them looking surprised at his means of travel. Another one of the gorillas was at the water's edge, biting off pieces of a smaller crocodile as it nursed a bloody arm.

Only the strong survive…

When he felt he might have gone far enough to change his trail and possibly shake off the hunter, Max moved toward the other side.

Leaping onto the dry section of land away from the edge, he glanced up at both suns.

Max guess he had about four more hours of sunlight, and he wanted to make sure to use as much of it as he could.

***

Damn, these things are smart!

More spores exploded around him, filling the air with orange clouds of gas, blocking his sight, and making his lungs burn.

Up in the trees were a pack of six armed monkeys that tossed down some large orange bulbs, screeching and hollering as they chased him for another mile.

The ground had turned sandy, such that he would start to sink if he slowed down, and it was here that these things had ambushed him.

At least twenty were still in pursuit, the others having given up, it seemed.

None came down from the branches, and Max dodged another bulb one sent his direction, darting around a tree, and avoiding the clouds of orange spores from the ones that continued on ahead.

It didn't matter if he changed directions; they shifted, communicating through their screeches.

He had managed to kill about six by sending ice attacks at them, but leaving a trail of destruction and burnt trees for his captor to possibly follow hadn't been in his plan.

Instead, he summoned an air wall right as one tossed a bulb at him, smiling as it exploded in its own face, the six-armed creature howling at him.

It took four more miles before they suddenly stopped, staying at some hidden line Max couldn't see or feel.

Around him, the trees were changing from the jungle kind to a smaller and tiny leaf kind. Even the shrubs were beginning to decrease in numbers, and the usual long leaf variety instead became thornier and more compact.

I'm getting closer to the desert, which means something out here is too hard for these things to fight.

Slowing and then stopping about forty yards away, Max turned and smiled at the dozen of six-armed monkeys that screeched at him, their yellow eyes glaring as they bounced up and down on branches, gesturing with each hand.

"It's been fun! We'll do this again hopefully never!"

Laughing, he turned and started moving deeper into the new area, sensing the change in temperature as well.

No longer was it just humid. It had been getting hotter also.

***

Max winced as the scorpion’s stinger pierced his back.

Six on one wasn’t the odds he wanted, but poison didn’t affect him, and his regeneration took care of the strikes he accepted while blocking the ones that would do more harm.

Each one was the size of a horse, and their outer shell was covered in hairlike follicles that were as sharp as a needle. A six-foot-long one, at that.

Another pair of pincers came for him, from both sides, and the one he had just clubbed with the bone wasn’t getting back up.

He heard the hairs on the scorpion he had just killed breaking as he ran up its purple body.

His Sonar saw the tail strike coming from one that had been waiting outside the ring and lifting the club. Max blocked the attack, getting his feet back on the ground, and he wheeled around, the club striking the closest pincer and cracking the shell.

Another fragment on his club chipped off upon impact.

Max frowned, summoning an ice spear as he gave himself a little more room to maneuver.

This was the third pack of scorpions he had faced as he moved through the thinning trees and rocks and burrows began to appear.

He weaved and bobbed around the large insects, striking them down with spells and club, sad that no stats came at all.

Two remained, and one ran off, leaving its injured partner in this attack behind.

“Seems like it's just you and me now,” Max said, as he moved toward the last scorpion.

He sent the spear he had made of ice forward, which pierced the shell with ease, and he watched as the insect dropped to the ground, twitching slightly as its life drained out of it.

You back yet?

Half a minute passed, no reply coming from his skill.

The only sounds that came was the last breath exhaled when the scorpion died, its body thudding against the sandy soil.

“I guess it’s still just me,” Max said as he studied the bone, seeing the fracture that was growing down the length of it and knowing that soon it would be gone.

Moving to where his gorilla backpack sat, he prepared for the next stage of this journey.

***

“That’s a lot of sand…”

Staring out over the blue-colored sand, Max looked up at the gigantic moon in the sky. It had a blue color that touched everything, washing the landscape in an eerie light.

Before him was a stretch of sand as far as he could see at night.

Trees no longer appeared here, having vanished about a mile ago, and even now the shrubs that had been present were almost all gone.

A memory came to mind.

His team… his family.

Facing the first boss in the tower.

That sandy desert area.

Chuckling at the memory of the pain he felt from being eaten alive by the acid, instead Max focused on how that moment had been a crucible.

It had forged them, turned them into a team that didn’t back down.

Looking at the vast space before him, Max shifted the bag on his back and started running.

Three days… I have three more days to cover as much distance as I can.

6 Chapter 280

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1897235/chapter-280 2024-11-12

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Transmigrated into a ruthless Xianxia world as a recently orphaned fatty, watch as an anti-social Computer Scientist leverages his tech skills to survive despite his trash cultivation talent.

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/97091/data-driven-daoist-xianxia-litrpg-progression]

Nothing about the river looked safe.
The water moved quickly, a branch having been the test object, currents underneath sweeping it the moment it hit the water.
Max could sense creatures underneath the surface, some that had turned toward him as he approached the bank near the trees.
The river twisted and turned through the jungle, and he couldn't see more than a quarter mile before it vanished around a bend. Even then the river was only about three hundred yards wide.
At least I don't have to swim, but I really want to know what's underneath.
Not being able to purify the water was his biggest problem, and as much as he trusted his poison immunity and his regeneration, it took a lot of effort not to have taken a drink yet.
Ten yards away, a creature waited in the mud, hidden by the brownish tinted liquid, yet Max could sense it. It had to be twenty feet long and felt like a crocodile from his world, only much bigger.
Pulling out the bone he had taken from the ape, Max held it in his right hand.
It was almost too thick for him to grip but it had resisted multiple strikes against trees and rocks. Proof that the constitution these creatures had were far beyond things from his world. Even the tower monsters didn't have the fortitude these did, outside of perhaps some of the bosses, yet he had been weaker then.
I guess we'll see how the water monsters play.
Using his left hand he scooped up a little water, taking a drink, his parched throat ignoring the taste of dirt.
Not even Everett's best alcohol tastes better than this does right now.
Sighing, he took another, watching as the creature moved forward slowly, never disturbing the mud too much as it came straight toward him.
Its movement was deliberate, steady, and showed no fear.
He was in the animal's territory—why should such a large beast be afraid of a single man?
Each drink sated his thirst even more, and Max stood up when the creature was about four yards out, its shape just starting to be visible to the naked eye if one knew where to look.
Grinning he took a step back and turned away.
Like an arrow fired from a bow, the beast shot out from its spot, leaping from the water and to the spot of land he had been standing on.
Max sensed it all and waited till its momentum provided it no way to dodge.
Spinning as he sidestepped, he swung the four-foot bone.

[Quick Attack]
[Power Strike]
It was the second time he had gotten to use this attack, and it was incredible. Even he could barely follow the movement of it. It made him understand why he hadn’t been able to activate any defensive skills when the mole had used it.
The twenty-four-foot-long crocodile took the full brunt of the attack against its eye socket, bones shattering from the power.
It had tried to turn its jaws, lined with teeth that looked sharp enough to tear Max in half, but the new skill was just too fast.
Now, the gray-skinned beast was knocked sideways and down from Max’s attack.
A grunting sound came from both the strike and the impact with the ground as it bounced, rolling through the ferns that decorated the river edge.
Before it had stopped rolling, Max was next to it, swinging over and over, striking the joints of its front legs, keeping an eye on the claws on its large feet.
Seven more strikes had landed, and before the crocodile had done anything but launch itself from the water, it lay dead, black blood staining the bone and the greenery.
Wiping his brow, Max smirked as he felt hair on his scalp.
I guess I can let it grow for a while.
Giving one more strike and making sure no attack came from a potential act of playing dead, Max moved to where the beast lay.
“What I wouldn’t give for a knife…”
The hide on it was tough, and it was one of the reasons Max had used the bone. Armor that stopped a dagger or sword was great but often found themselves suffering from a blunt attack.
Rolling the beast over, he opened its jaw, running his finger along some of the teeth and smiled.
Leaving the corpse there he moved to his stomach, turned backpack, and retrieved the tooth from the snake.
***
Holding the bottom jaw of the crocodile in his hands, Max couldn’t help but grin.
Using both hands he began to push on the two bones at the middle part of the *U* shaped section, squinting, as he wasn’t sure where it might break first.
Increasing the pressure he gave, it finally snapped on the left side, leaving a three-foot section of jaw with teeth lining it. The other piece was about two thirds of the remainder of the jaw, and dropping that piece, he went to work on the corpse.
It took some force for the teeth to saw through the dense section of hide at the top, but Max managed to finally break through, and once he could slip the bone saw into the hole, cutting became a much easier process.
Soon, a ten foot, very rough on the edges, section of hide had been rolled up, stuffed into the expanding backpack, and he was ready to keep moving.
Lifting up the corpse, Max tossed it into the water, watching it splash and begin to slowly sink.
About six seconds later the water erupted as other animals inside the watery domain moved to partake in his bloody offering.
The fight flowed downstream quickly as the current carried the meal away, and Max grabbed his bag, ran to the water, and quickly began running on top of it, moving upstream as he went.
So glad I kept these pants!
He could sense other animals moving under him, a few scattering at his presence as he moved, but a school of three-foot-long fish started chasing him, trying to catch up as he moved across.
Slowing down, he could sense their sharp teeth and something else inside their mouths.
A sucker?
Darting out occasionally was a long tube with small teeth on it.

Shuddering at the thought of fifty fish getting onto his flesh with those things, Max picked up his speed and continued running for another thirty minutes along the top of the water.
He passed multiple animals on the bank, each of them looking surprised at his means of travel. Another one of the gorillas was at the water's edge, biting off pieces of a smaller crocodile as it nursed a bloody arm.
Only the strong survive...
When he felt he might have gone far enough to change his trail and possibly shake off the hunter, Max moved toward the other side.
Leaping onto the dry section of land away from the edge, he glanced up at both suns. Max guess he had about four more hours of sunlight, and he wanted to make sure to use as much of it as he could.
***
Damn, these things are smart!
More spores exploded around him, filling the air with orange clouds of gas, blocking his sight, and making his lungs burn.
Up in the trees were a pack of six armed monkeys that tossed down some large orange bulbs, screeching and hollering as they chased him for another mile.
The ground had turned sandy, such that he would start to sink if he slowed down, and it was here that these things had ambushed him.
At least twenty were still in pursuit, the others having given up, it seemed.
None came down from the branches, and Max dodged another bulb one sent his direction, darting around a tree, and avoiding the clouds of orange spores from the ones that continued on ahead.
It didn't matter if he changed directions; they shifted, communicating through their screeches.
He had managed to kill about six by sending ice attacks at them, but leaving a trail of destruction and burnt trees for his captor to possibly follow hadn't been in his plan.
Instead, he summoned an air wall right as one tossed a bulb at him, smiling as it exploded in its own face, the six-armed creature howling at him.
It took four more miles before they suddenly stopped, staying at some hidden line Max couldn't see or feel.
Around him, the trees were changing from the jungle kind to a smaller and tiny leaf kind. Even the shrubs were beginning to decrease in numbers, and the usual long leaf variety instead became thornier and more compact.
I'm getting closer to the desert, which means something out here is too hard for these things to fight.
Slowing and then stopping about forty yards away, Max turned and smiled at the dozen of six-armed monkeys that screeched at him, their yellow eyes glaring as they bounced up and down on branches, gesturing with each hand.
"It's been fun! We'll do this again hopefully never!"
Laughing, he turned and started moving deeper into the new area, sensing the change in temperature as well.
No longer was it just humid. It had been getting hotter also.
***
Max winced as the scorpion's stinger pierced his back.
Six on one wasn't the odds he wanted, but poison didn't affect him, and his regeneration took care of the strikes he accepted while blocking the ones that would do more harm.
Each one was the size of a horse, and their outer shell was covered in hairlike follicles that were as sharp as a needle. A six-foot-long one, at that.
Another pair of pincers came for him, from both sides, and the one he had just clubbed with the bone wasn't getting back up.
He heard the hairs on the scorpion he had just killed breaking as he ran up its purple body.

His Sonar saw the tail strike coming from one that had been waiting outside the ring and lifting the club. Max blocked the attack, getting his feet back on the ground, and he wheeled around, the club striking the closest pincer and cracking the shell.
Another fragment on his club chipped off upon impact.
Max frowned, summoning an ice spear as he gave himself a little more room to maneuver.
This was the third pack of scorpions he had faced as he moved through the thinning trees and rocks and burrows began to appear.
He weaved and bobbed around the large insects, striking them down with spells and club, sad that no stats came at all.
Two remained, and one ran off, leaving its injured partner in this attack behind.
“Seems like it's just you and me now,” Max said, as he moved toward the last scorpion.
He sent the spear he had made of ice forward, which pierced the shell with ease, and he watched as the insect dropped to the ground, twitching slightly as its life drained out of it.
You back yet?
Half a minute passed, no reply coming from his skill.
The only sounds that came was the last breath exhaled when the scorpion died, its body thudding against the sandy soil.
“I guess it’s still just me,” Max said as he studied the bone, seeing the fracture that was growing down the length of it and knowing that soon it would be gone.
Moving to where his gorilla backpack sat, he prepared for the next stage of this journey.
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“That’s a lot of sand…”
Staring out over the blue-colored sand, Max looked up at the gigantic moon in the sky. It had a blue color that touched everything, washing the landscape in an eerie light.
Before him was a stretch of sand as far as he could see at night.
Trees no longer appeared here, having vanished about a mile ago, and even now the shrubs that had been present were almost all gone.
A memory came to mind.
His team… his family.
Facing the first boss in the tower.
That sandy desert area.
Chuckling at the memory of the pain he felt from being eaten alive by the acid, instead Max focused on how that moment had been a crucible.
It had forged them, turned them into a team that didn’t back down.
Looking at the vast space before him, Max shifted the bag on his back and started running.
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PAT 7 281 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 281**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389338 2024-10-29

Wincing, Max waited as his arm regrew.

Tearing it from his own socket was something he never imagined doing, yet it had been necessary.

The sand worms he had slain wasn’t large like the one he had fought in the tower with his friends.

Instead twenty corpses were burnt to ash, scattered around him for thirty yards.

As a pack they had come, and when he gripped the first one to leap from the soil, its four-foot-long body, covered in acid, told Max his way of thinking was wrong.

There was no time to play with these things. He couldn’t keep acting like this was fun, no matter how much he had tried to force himself to.

Taking a deep breath, Max let it out.

Still it hadn’t been a total loss.

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Acid Resistance]?]

[Yes / No]

[Skill Description - Acid Resistance]

*****

Acid Resistance - Reduces all damage and effects of acid-related attacks by 40%.

*****

Had he not gotten that from the first kill, Max wasn’t sure how that fight had gone.

The worst part of their acid had been how fast it melted his flesh.

Like butter on a hot sauce pan, it immediately began to turn into goo, dripping onto the sandy floor.

“I really wish you would talk to me.”

Still no reply came, and Max frowned.

He touched his hair and realized it was growing faster than he thought.

Perhaps it was his regeneration skill or something else, but soon it would be long enough to run his hands through.

Jogging to where he had dropped the backpack, Max knew he had to change how he traveled.

All that mattered was speed.

Nothing was worth fighting if he could avoid it.

Distance from the spot the hunter had dropped him off was above everything.

With his sack on his shoulder, Max took off, not holding back but running at a pace that would allow him to run forever.

A dust cloud rose up in the night sky as he blazed up and down the dunes, sand barely displaced as he ran.

Hours passed, and miles were consumed, yet the stretch of sand never seemed to end.

The large moon passed quickly overhead, his only companion as Max ignored any creature that had attempted to give chase.

Only one had been able to get somewhat close, until Max sent an ice spear at it.

The large, catlike creature appeared to have decided after his spell that this prey was not worth its time.

He was speed.

Faster than an arrow.

He was to lightning as a gale to a tempest.

Nothing could catch him, and that made Max finally grin.

How often do I not embrace what I must? My skill warned me. There would be a time I would have to be heartless.

Did my lack of that allow me to be captured? Had I been prepared, could I have avoided that portal?

Max ran through different scenarios in his head, and the conclusion was always the same.

He couldn’t avoid that attempt.

Even now he knew if the hunter appeared, eventually he would be caught.

Somehow, he had to get stronger, but the question was how.

Nothing had given him any stats in a day.

Bright stars sparkled in the night sky, and Max considered what other worlds were out there.

How many other places could he perhaps one day visit if he somehow escaped and survived?

How much stronger did he really need to become?

***

Waves of heat radiated off the sand.

The suns had only been up a few hours, and already sweat was pouring off his body.

A few birds were in the sky, circling the barren area he ran across.

I’m not sure I’m even going in the right direction. A single degree in a different direction when I started off would have me somewhere much farther away. At least that should make it harder to find me.

The real question Max had was how far this desert stretched. He had easily run over a couple hundred miles, yet there was no end to the sand.

He couldn’t see mountains or anything else.

Groaning, Max began to turn right, changing the angle and direction he was running as the memory of the map his captor had drawn reminded him of the desert and the mountains.

Think!

Chiding himself, he continued running, ignoring the sweltering heat that continued to rise, occasionally summoning an ice shard, putting it in his mouth, and letting it melt.

Yet another thing that took me a few days to think about.

Struggling to stay focused and not continue to doubt himself and his failures, Max ran on.

***

He blinked multiple times as far off in the distance, Max saw the shape of what had to be mountains.

At least two hours had passed since the moon had risen, and the change in the distance felt like a trick at first.

So many times Max had imagined seeing things from Tanila, Fowl, and Batrire, all racing toward him, to other people from his past.

Twice he had believed mountains were coming, and he ran harder, only to find they never stopped moving away.

He had almost activated his Haste ability, yet his mind had held firm, overcoming the desire inside.

Now, however, the shape was growing larger, and off to the left and a ways away, it looked like there was a light of some kind.

Changing his angle slightly, Max aimed for a spot that would take him near that possible light but not right to it.

If people were out here, he had no clue what they might be like or who they might serve.

Even with all the potential concerns, Max felt renewed, knowing that an end to the sand was coming soon, and that would possibly be someone to talk with.

***

High above him, stretching for at least two miles were the mountains, a straight wall of stone that ran in both directions. The sand met the rock, and both sections seemed to declare their

domain had no place for the other, a line, drawn in the sand basically, that separated the two.

It was hard to see much above him, as the moon didn't cast enough light, but he had already done the math, watching the shape grow, and now standing near it he knew it was immense.

Slowly, Max moved along the stone side, staying low and moving in the direction he knew the light to be.

A few dunes, he figured, hid it, or perhaps a cave, hollowed into the stone, but Max was certain the fire was still there.

Somewhere.

I need it to be there!

Two miles later, he spotted the soft glow of a fire, coming indeed from a cave set within the stone section he was traveling along.

Gently setting his pack onto the ground, he moved closer, scanning the area for anyone or anything.

Right outside the cave, near the mouth, was the shape of someone standing.

Is that a…

His eyes widened at seeing that it wasn't a human, elf, or dwarf but instead it was something like the cat creatures they had fought in a dungeon.

Max felt his heart beating fast, and there before him was one of the kemonomimis Tanila had talked about.

A freaking cat person… who would have thought?

Watching intently, he studied the guard, saw the robe they wore, which covered their body except for the head.

The moon reflected off a spear of some kind, a long sword blade attached to a staff.

It's like a glaive, but I think it's a… naginata.

The blade wasn’t as thick as a glaive would be; instead it was curved, and Max ignored the questions he had, remaining silent as he watched and waited.

An hour or more passed when a cry came from the cave, followed by laughter.

It sounded like what a woman or child might make, high pitched and different from the deeper tones of the laughter that had followed.

Part of him wanted to rush forward, wanting to save whoever might need help, but Max fought that urge.

Words came from inside the cave, and the one standing guard turned, shouting something back as it covered one of its eyes with a hand.

Saving its night vision… so they are smart.

A conversation took place, and the one outside seemed upset by whatever was being said, pointing the weapon back inside the entrance.

More shouts came, followed by another high-pitched cry before the sound of someone being slapped echoed from inside.

The guard turned back to the sand and was shaking his head.

Max watched as he began to move, past the entrance of the cave and toward the edge of the rock, moving the five yards or so to where it ended.

Creeping forward, Max got as close as he could.

Activating Stealth, he moved, his skill helping him avoid stepping on any loose stones as he moved quickly toward the cave entrance, keeping an eye on the one who was supposed to keep watch.

Max almost paused when he realized the guard was over seven feet tall, and the shape hidden by the robes no longer escaped his gaze. The guard was muscular, broad shouldered, and the hand that held the weapon reminded him of the boss they had faced.

Not sure how strong these cats are…

Glancing inside the cave, his eyes needed a moment to adjust to the fire that burned inside a metal box, no smoke coming from it.

Are those… lizard women?

One looked to be unconscious, her robe torn, and the shape of the body more had curves, not something the lizardmen he had faced before had. The gray-colored scales she had were covered in blood along her mouth, and Max thought he could see swelling along one eye.

Beside her, leaning against the stone wall about fifteen yards away, was another lizard person, glaring at the cats, who were laughing and making hip gestures which carried across all planets, it seemed.

She was bound at her hands and feet, snapping her jaws while saying something in a language Max couldn't understand.

His heart tugged, and Max winced, knowing he couldn't help but do something.

There was no way to understand what had happened, why they were captive.

Choices had to be made quickly as his timer announced ten seconds.

Part of him wanted to just follow the group, see where they were going. Another part of him yearned to not watch anyone be held captive, knowing how that felt.

I'm a captive now…

Sighing inside, Max shook his head.

Two of the large cat men sat cross-legged, chewing on dried meat and talking, ignoring the other two.

None appeared to be looking outside the cave.

Moving with purpose, Max made a choice.

Coming up behind the guard, his options were limited. He had no idea how tough they were.

Could he even kill one from behind? Were they so strong that a single attack, even from stealth with this bone, would do nothing?

If I end up killing this one with a single hit, then any chance of bargaining or discussion would be out of the picture.

Four seconds flashed in the corner of his vision, and Max frowned, hoping for the best.

He swung his weapon at the guard's head, watching as the bone connected right on the cat's ear.

A *thunk* sounded, and the lookout began to fall sideways, body limp.

Catching him, in one arm, Max tossed the club onto the sand a few feet away, grabbing the weapon the warrior held.

Pulling it from his hand, a sense of safety filled him.

I have a weapon!

Movement alerted him that others were coming. Even though the noise he had made had not been that much, all four of the ones inside the cave moved to the entrance, holding weapons and crouching low.

The damn party window!

Without hesitation, Max moved, lowering the weapon to the throat of the one he had struck down, one hand held up toward the four who had started to move.

"We need to talk!"

7 Chapter 281

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1899251/chapter-281 2024-11-13

Wincing, Max waited as his arm regrew.
Tearing it from his own socket was something he never imagined doing, yet it had been necessary.
The sand worms he had slain wasn't large like the one he had fought in the tower with his friends.
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"I really wish you would talk to me."
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Nothing was worth fighting if he could avoid it.
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Max almost paused when he realized the guard was over seven feet tall, and the shape hidden by the robes no longer escaped his gaze. The guard was muscular, broad shouldered, and the hand that held the weapon reminded him of the boss they had faced.
Not sure how strong these cats are…
Glancing inside the cave, his eyes needed a moment to adjust to the fire that burned inside a metal box, no smoke coming from it.
Are those… lizard women?
One looked to be unconscious, her robe torn, and the shape of the body more had curves, not something the lizardmen he had faced before had. The gray-colored scales she had were covered in blood along her mouth, and Max thought he could see swelling along one eye.
Beside her, leaning against the stone wall about fifteen yards away, was another lizard person, glaring at the cats, who were laughing and making hip gestures which carried across all planets, it seemed.
She was bound at her hands and feet, snapping her jaws while saying something in a language Max couldn’t understand.
His heart tugged, and Max winced, knowing he couldn’t help but do something.
There was no way to understand what had happened, why they were captive.
Choices had to be made quickly as his timer announced ten seconds.
Part of him wanted to just follow the group, see where they were going. Another part of him yearned to not watch anyone be held captive, knowing how that felt.
I’m a captive now…
Sighing inside, Max shook his head.
Two of the large cat men sat cross-legged, chewing on dried meat and talking, ignoring the other two.

None appeared to be looking outside the cave.
Moving with purpose, Max made a choice.
Coming up behind the guard, his options were limited. He had no idea how tough they were.
Could he even kill one from behind? Were they so strong that a single attack, even from stealth with this bone, would do nothing?
If I end up killing this one with a single hit, then any chance of bargaining or discussion would be out of the picture.
Four seconds flashed in the corner of his vision, and Max frowned, hoping for the best.
He swung his weapon at the guard's head, watching as the bone connected right on the cat's ear.
A *thunk* sounded, and the lookout began to fall sideways, body limp.
Catching him, in one arm, Max tossed the club onto the sand a few feet away, grabbing the weapon the warrior held.
Pulling it from his hand, a sense of safety filled him.
I have a weapon!
Movement alerted him that others were coming. Even though the noise he had made had not been that much, all four of the ones inside the cave moved to the entrance, holding weapons and crouching low.
The damn party window!
Without hesitation, Max moved, lowering the weapon to the throat of the one he had struck down, one hand held up toward the four who had started to move.
"We need to talk!"

PAT 8 282 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 282**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389341 2024-10-30

He could see and sense the perplexed looks on the warriors' faces, two of them with a staff like his, one with a thick mace, and another with a scimitar and shield.

The one on the far left said something, and Max shook his head, tapping his ear.

"I can't understand you! You don't want to fight me!"

All four began to spread out slowly, and Max decided he needed to put on a show of strength, since words obviously didn't seem to work.

Summoning a fireball, Max began to push mana into it, light from the ball of flame shining around the stone and sand.

Each of the warriors paused, looking at him and then each other.

The same one who had yelled first said something, and then Max saw it lower his bladed staff to the stone slowly and stand up.

It began to mess with a ring on its finger, making noises as it did.

“I can’t understand you!” Max exclaimed, holding off on making the fireball any bigger, ignoring the fact it was now about four feet wide.

“Wa… wait… I…”

“I can understand! You and I—”

Max was ecstatic at being able to hear the slightest bit of words from someone after so long, but the kemonomimi held up his hand and went back to touching the ring.

“Almost… close… say something.”

“What do you need me to say?”

A toothy grin appeared over the beast, and it nodded, saying something Max couldn’t understand at the other three.

“Who are you? Why have you attacked our brother?!”

“Why do you have women in there and treat them like that?”

Max could feel the eyes of all of them, moving between the weapon at the warrior at his feet and the fireball hovering above his head.

“They are ours. Earned through combat and money. How else should slaves be treated?”

Frowning, Max couldn’t think of a good answer for that statement.

As he considered his words, Max started summoning his fire elemental, and when it appeared, the fireball grew a quarter bigger, causing the four of them to back up, eyes widening in shock.

“You have a collar. Where is your master?”

“I have no master,” Max replied. “I want to get this off, but I am also not a fan of slaves. Tell me, where is a town that I can get this removed?”

Laughter came from the other three when Max touched it, until the cat he spoke with said something and made them stop.

“I am Max. Tell me your name.”

“My people call me… in your words it would be Strong Runner. Are you a user of magic?”

Motioning to the fireball on one side and the glowing elemental hovering in the air near him, Max grinned.

“And you have crossed the wasteland alone?”

Frowning, Max nodded.

Strong Runner winced and said something again to the other three, who all took another step back, lowering their weapons once more.

“Forgive me… Max. We”—he paused, bending a knee and bringing a fist and palm together—“mean no di… disrespect. Tell me, how can we make this moment right?”

That ring is translating for both of us… something doesn’t convey, I guess, from my language to his.

“I need a weapon, a ring like yours, and a guide to a city to get this collar removed. Something tells me that you four might not be the guide I need. Let me have the lizard woman who is in there, and I will go.”

Even as Strong Runner made faces, teeth appearing as he growled for a second, Max began sending more mana into the fireball, causing it to grow even larger.

All four of the cat men began to discuss something, and while the tension between them was apparent, the two times his translator pointed at Max eventually got whatever point needed to be made across.

The one with the shield and scimitar bowed, laid his weapons on the ground, and went inside, returning in just a moment with the one Max had said he wanted, who was bucking as he carried her out on his shoulder.

The warrior set her down, not in the gentlest manner, on the ground, so that her face was pointed at Max.

Her eyes widened at what she saw, and her lips began to move upward, a creepy smile appearing as she took in the view.

She said something, earning a grunt, and one of the men moved forward until Strong Runner said something.

“Look at the one beneath your blade. He has a ring on his second finger. Take it.”

Max bent down, never taking his eyes off the four of them, and found the ring they were discussing.

Lots of weird symbols were on it, but it was actually a pair of rings, fused together.

Pulling it off with one hand, Max slipped it over his middle finger.

A sensation of white noise and something touched his brain, and Max moved his jaw, popping his ears.

“Now turn the ring so that the *xrea* and the *broea* are lined up.”

Glancing at the ring and the symbols, Max had no idea which one was what.

“Send the lizard woman. She can do it.”

Strong Runner gave an order, and the one who had carried out their slave came forward, pulling a dagger from under its robe and quickly cut the cords that bound the woman.

She spat at him, moving away a few feet on her backside before climbing to her feet.

An exchange of words came between her and Strong Runner before she turned to Max and studied him.

Slowly she moved, to where he was, bowing her head a few times and holding out a gray scaled hand, waiting for Max to give her his hand.

Nodding, he did, and she gently touched the ring, turning it a few times. When she stopped, the woman bowed.

“Thank you for my freedom.”

Her voice sounded nothing like he had expected.

In his mind she might sound like a snake, long drawn-out *s*'s and all, but instead, her tone was like a child, a happy child.

"You are welcome. Now tell me, will you lead me to a city where I can get this removed?"

She grinned, or Max assumed she was grinning, and nodded.

"It is a ways away, but we can make it there. Tell me. Why save me?"

Max held up his hand and looked at Strong Runner.

"I need to do one thing before we go. Trust me when I say this. You do not want to fight."

"There is honor in fighting, but there is no honor in a death one knows cannot be won unless it saves a life of one's family. As long as you do not harm my brothers or I, I will honor the agreement we made."

Max nodded and handed the weapon to the woman before him.

"Hold this," Max said as he pointed at the warrior that was still unconscious. "Do not fight or seek revenge. I will be back in just a moment."

"Where are you—"

The second the woman had his weapon, Max ran, racing along the rock to where he had left his pack. Coming upon it, he grabbed it, turning around and sprinting back.

Upon his arrival the woman had the weapon pointed at the four, eyes wide and glancing around.

"How did you move like that?!" she exclaimed as Max came to a stop beside her.

"Do not worry. I needed my stuff before we left."

All of the warriors and his newest addition stared at him. Their eyes were like the moon, stretched to the limits of their sockets.

“You carry that? A… stomach?”

“What is he?”

“Where did he come from?”

Grinning, Max ignored Strong Runner and the other two who had asked questions.

“We are leaving. You four may tend to your friend. Trust me when I say, do not follow us.”

Bringing his fist and palm together, once more, the cat warrior bowed and nodded.

“Be safe with that one. She is more likely to bite you than we are.”

The woman scoffed and spat on the one who was unconscious, earning a few growls from the other warriors.

“No more, give me the weapon.”

She clutched it tight and then finally nodded.

Sighing she handed it over, and watched as Max set it down next to his bag before moving toward the sand.

At the edge of it was one of the sand worms he hated. He had sensed it the first time he had encountered the guard, which was why the cat creature hadn’t moved out there.

Yet he wanted his bone and knew if someone else went for it, things might not go well.

When he touched the sand, cries came from them all, yet Max moved to where his bone was, holding out a hand and catching the worm that erupted out from the sand.

It squealed as he gripped it behind its mouth, the acid that covered it burning yet not doing more than slowly dissolving his skin, no longer eating it as it had the first time.

[Regeneration]

More were coming, drawn it seemed by his presence, and Max moved back to the rock area, watching as his new traveling partner moved away, holding both hands up.

“It will kill you!”

Smirking, Max shook his head and when safely on the stone and far enough away from the unconscious warrior, squeezed, killing the worm.

Dropping it onto the rock, Max wiped some of the acid on the rock, waiting for the burning to stop.

“How can you survive that?!”

None of the warriors had spoken, only the woman he had bartered for.

“What is your name?”

Cocking her head, she appeared to smile at that question.

“I am called… One Who is Angry.”

Max started to howl, and the woman appeared not happy with that reaction.

“Sorry, your name… it translates… badly to my side. Can I call you something else?”

Recognizing a scowl when he saw one, Max waited for her to nod.

“I had a friend called Aimee. Can I call you that?”

“Ai… Aimee. This is a good name?”

Max nodded.

A frown appeared before she shrugged.

“If you desire it, what can I say?”

Storing the bone in his bag, Max stuffed the weapon inside it as best he could, wincing at how it didn’t really fit without sticking out too much.

“Strong Runner, when someone asks what happened, do not talk about me. There are those who are looking for me, and if they find you, I cannot promise they won’t kill you for knowledge of me.”

It’s seemed impossible, but all four cat warriors started to shake.

“There is one who hunts you who is stronger than you?”

Max nodded slowly.

“Do you know who I am talking about?”

“He means the one… the one past the trees.”

All four of them were whispering but Max heard them anyway.

“If that one hunts you, Max, we shall not tell him. No one wants to meet him.”

“Do you know his name? What he is called?”

A scowl appeared, and Max could hear the slight growl inside all four of them as anger took away their fear.

“He is called…”

A pause came as whatever the man had said took a moment to translate.

“Death of the worst kind.”

Sighing, Max grabbed his bag in his right hand and then looked at his newest party member, Aimee.

“It is time we go.”

Sending the fireball into the sands, shrieks came as the spell washed over an area, some worms dying from the spell.

Dismissing his elemental, Max grinned.

“Which way do we need to go?”

All of them pointed out toward the desert area, slightly away from the wall.

“It is too dangerous for travel at night,” Aimee stated. “To do so is… madness.”

“You may not like this, but I’m going to carry you for a bit, and we will be fine.”

“Carry me? What do you—”

Max didn’t wait, tossing her over his shoulder as best as possible.

One arm had her wrapped tight; the other had his pack.

“Be safe, Strong Runner.”

Turning, Max took off across the sand, leaving the four warriors with their mouths open while a loud shriek echoed through the dark night across the sand.

8 Chapter 282

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1901043/chapter-282 2024-11-14

He could see and sense the perplexed looks on the warriors’ faces, two of them with a staff like his, one with a thick mace, and another with a scimitar and shield.
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“Hold this,” Max said as he pointed at the warrior that was still unconscious. “Do not fight or seek revenge. I will be back in just a moment.”
“Where are you—”
The second the woman had his weapon, Max ran, racing along the rock to where he had left his pack. Coming upon it, he grabbed it, turning around and sprinting back.
Upon his arrival the woman had the weapon pointed at the four, eyes wide and glancing around.
“How did you move like that?!” she exclaimed as Max came to a stop beside her.
“Do not worry. I needed my stuff before we left.”
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At the edge of it was one of the sand worms he hated. He had sensed it the first time he had encountered the guard, which was why the cat creature hadn’t moved out there.
Yet he wanted his bone and knew if someone else went for it, things might not go well.
When he touched the sand, cries came from them all, yet Max moved to where his bone was, holding out a hand and catching the worm that erupted out from the sand.
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[Regeneration]
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Cocking her head, she appeared to smile at that question.
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Max started to howl, and the woman appeared not happy with that reaction.
“Sorry, your name… it translates… badly to my side. Can I call you something else?”
Recognizing a scowl when he saw one, Max waited for her to nod.
“I had a friend called Aimee. Can I call you that?”
“Ai… Aimee. This is a good name?”
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A frown appeared before she shrugged.
“If you desire it, what can I say?”
Storing the bone in his bag, Max stuffed the weapon inside it as best he could, wincing at how it didn’t really fit without sticking out too much.
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A scowl appeared, and Max could hear the slight growl inside all four of them as anger took away their fear.
“He is called…”
A pause came as whatever the man had said took a moment to translate.
“Death of the worst kind.”
Sighing, Max grabbed his bag in his right hand and then looked at his newest party member, Aimee.
“It is time we go.”
Sending the fireball into the sands, shrieks came as the spell washed over an area, some worms dying from the spell.
Dismissing his elemental, Max grinned.
“Which way do we need to go?”
All of them pointed out toward the desert area, slightly away from the wall.
“It is too dangerous for travel at night,” Aimee stated. “To do so is… madness.”
“You may not like this, but I’m going to carry you for a bit, and we will be fine.”
“Carry me? What do you—”
Max didn’t wait, tossing her over his shoulder as best as possible.
One arm had her wrapped tight; the other had his pack.
“Be safe, Strong Runner.”
Turning, Max took off across the sand, leaving the four warriors with their mouths open while a loud shriek echoed through the dark night across the sand.

PAT 9 283 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 283**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389344 2024-10-31

Max couldn’t help but smile as he raced across the sand, their shapes illuminated by the blue glow of the moon.
His new companion, Aimee, screamed for only about twenty seconds, which didn’t matter, as he ran in the direction each of them had pointed for five miles before angling back toward the stone cliffs.
“What are you?! Who are you!?”
Aimee was backing away after being set down on the flat rock surface, her black eyes reflecting the fireball Max had summoned upon reaching there. She tugged at her robe and moved closer toward the sheer stone wall.
“I won’t hurt you, I promise,” Max replied as he held out his free hand toward her. “Why would I rescue you and then do something…”
He stopped talking, realizing that perhaps for her this might be exactly what she was thinking.
Trying to smile, Max gave her some room, watching as she glanced in both directions.
“If you want to go, I won’t stop you. I… I heard you or your friend scream, and I couldn’t—”
“She wasn’t my friend!” Aimee snapped. “I mean… she was just…”
Her facial skin was tight as her jaw clamped shut, both nostrils flaring out a bit as she breathed. A shudder came, and then an unexpected bow was given.
“I was sold as a slave, just like her. We were deemed… worthless.”
Aimee’s voice went hollow as she stared at the dark stone ground.
“You wouldn’t understand. You have power. I don’t.”
Max let go of his sack, letting it fall as he took a seat and sat cross-legged, looking up at her.
“I wasn’t strong once… People tried to kill me,” Max replied, wincing as he relived all those memories. “I was hunted, betrayed, and finally found some friends. They became a family, and just when I thought I was strong enough to protect them…”
Sighing, Max saw that Aimee’s eyes were locked on his.
“The hunter or as those warriors said, *Death of the worst kind*, brought me here. Held me for months and has released me. I have only a few days left to get as far away as possible from him. After that, he will start to track me down again.”
Aimee’s eyes widened, and she slowly sat down, blinking rapidly as she appeared to be studying his face.
“You were weak? Like me?”
Snorting, Max shrugged.
“I wanted to be a baker, just someone who made bread and cake.”
“What is cake?” Aimee asked as she cocked her head.

“Bread that is sweet and has a creamy layer on the outside,” Max replied, using his hands to best mimic what he said.
“Oh. You mean *bunakamea*. We have something like that, but it is very expensive. Not many can make it well, and the items needed to make are not cheap.”
“Perhaps one day I can make you some. For now, I need to know a few things about where I am and what this world is like.”
Shifting a little, Aimee’s jaw dropped.
“You are from another world!? I knew it! There are very few like you, and all have power!”
He watched her reactions, and heard the shock in her voice.
Some sounds came from down the stone area in the direction they would be heading.
Aimee jumped to her feet, hissing as she stared into the darkness.
“We should go… those are… *demon cats*.”
Max stood, puzzled by the word he heard in his head.
“They are dangerous?”
She nodded.
“Very. Even those fools would struggle to face them with that cave. Out here, with nowhere to run, they would be cut down. That is why the Stone Masters carve those caves. Some are higher, and some are on the ground. Can you move stone as well?”
Max tried to understand what Aimee was asking, but he sent the fireball higher into the sky, watching the ball of flame illuminate the rock surface.
About forty feet up was a hole in the mountain about a quarter of a mile away that he could make out.
Loud cries, almost sounding like a child or a woman screaming echoed along the stone walls.
“They see the light! They will come! It is too high for us to reach that!”
Aimee was starting to back away, glancing in the direction they had come.
“Perhaps we can return to the cave, fight with them. Surely—”
“We’ll be fine. I’m going to carry you again, so hold still.”
“How will we—”
Max smiled as he grabbed his bag and quickly picked up Aimee once more, running toward the wall and leaping into the air when he was close.
His angle and height was good—with the strength in his legs, the forty feet wasn’t much of an issue—but even then, he summoned a wall of air, laughing as his new companion screamed as they turned midair, jumping into the cave.

“What if someone was in here!” she exclaimed as Max set her down.
“There wasn’t, I already checked,” Max replied, dropping his pack once more.
His Sonar had told him the cave was about twenty feet deep and that no one or anything was inside it.
The fireball hung outside still, providing a little bit of light to see.
More cries came, and with each, a sensation of pain and suffering that wanted to tug at his soul.
Aimee fell to the floor, pulled her knees up, and hugged them, slowly rocking.
“Are you ok?”
She whimpered and shook her head.
“I’m weak. Worthless. Deemed unworthy to be given a stone, to be given power. My—”
A sudden cry cut her off, and Max turned to look over the edge, seeing movement coming toward where his fireball was.
“Are you safe up here?”
“Yes… they cannot climb this high, and… wait, why did you ask if I was safe?”
Grinning, Max gave her a wink, though he was certain she missed it in the darkness.
“I’m going to go fight them.”
“Please don’t! If you die, I’ll be stuck here!”
Max pulled the weapon from the bag and spun it quickly.
[Inspect Weapon]
[System type does not match current system… Translating…]
*****
Well Crafted Naginata
*****
Well damn… no stats? How am I supposed to know how good this is?
“Aimee, I’ll be back, but one last question. Will this blade cut those creatures?”
“Ye… yes.”
Casting Lightning on his weapon, Max grinned.
“Don’t move, I’ll be back.”
He took a step, falling down from the entrance, and landed on the ground, making a thud as he hit, but his body easily handled that kind of impact.
Lowering the fireball, he began to infuse more mana into it and also summoned his familiar.
As shadows appeared from the light, the rocks and small boulders that were strewn around, Max heard the cry again and felt the pain

in his chest, knowing whatever it was had to be some kind of ability or attack.
Then seven shapes appeared at the edge of the lighted area, the blue glow of the moon causing their bodies to be revealed.
Each one had empty eye sockets, no eyes present, and their bodies had a set of lines that looked like runes of some sort, glowing blue in the light of the moon.
The rest of their body matched the color of the stone cliffs, providing the perfect camouflage against anyone who didn't have light like he did.
As one they moved, a solid line of attackers, each the same distance apart. Their claws extended from paws, making a clicking sound on the stone.
Twenty yards seemed like a lot of space until the seven of them made it so there wasn't any place to get past them.
They're smart… pack hunters.
Each one took a turn as they moved within fifty yards, crying out with a horrible sound like someone torturing a child, which echoed off the walls.
Sobs came from above, and Max heard Aimee as she struggled with whatever effect it was supposed to have.
"It won't work on me," Max called out.
A spear of ice began to appear next to him, growing larger, and Max studied the seven, looking to see if one perhaps was the leader.
Each one was about the same size of a horse, fur now visible as they got within thirty-five yards. Liquid dripped from their teeth, and Max groaned, not sure whether it was simply drool or something else.
Standing near the stone wall, Max waited, watching as the seven surrounded him, none moving closer than twenty yards as they all waited till each was exactly the same distance.
Ready to see what they could do, Max feinted an attack to the right, sending his fireball at the one on the left.
The one he moved toward backed up, while the one on the left immediately started to move forward with the others, finding a ball of flame half its size now racing toward it.
Just before his spell would hit, the cat vanished, and the closest one to it grew in size by about a third.
Flames slammed into the stone, sending out fire which splattered, and as it was about to hit the one near his original target, it too vanished, and the cat that was next to it now grew by at least half its size.

Not sure what would happen if all seven joined together, Max started casting Fire Nova, moving toward the one on his right, watching as it dodged backward, vanishing right before his weapon struck.
Four shapes came at him, none waiting any longer.
Max spun, swinging with his weapon, the distance gone in a second.
The one closest to him cried out as the weapon cut its chest, the long, curved blade slicing till it struck bone, sending the cat flying toward the sand.
[Demonic Teleportation]
Appearing behind the biggest one, Max swung.
[Power Strike]
[Quick Attack]
The back two legs were cut off, and a cry louder than before came.
[Fire Nova]
The spell went off, washing over the stone and toward the remaining three.
Flames moved, and right before they engulfed the one he had just disabled, its body vanished, the closest one doubling in size.
Max's Sonar told him what else had happened: The one he had sent flying had vanished also at the same time, and now only two remained.
Both suffered from the flames but not like Max had hoped.
The smaller one cried out, and as the second wave of his spell washed out from him, it, too, vanished, leaving the last one now even larger.
It spun, turning with a speed that seemed impossible, faster than he was.
Claws came and attacked.
[Evasion]
Max dodged, parrying and moving back, as he sent the ice spear he had held in check at the creature.
It tried to move and avoid it, but Max summoned his wall of stone and wall of air, boxing it in.
The spell pierced the brown fur but only by about a foot, barely enough to draw blood as the beast came at him, not willing to play any longer.
It only took a second for Max to understand the truth of this fight.
There wasn't any other way to win. His spell wouldn't do enough, and the last wave of the Fire Nova didn't even seem to accomplish more than the smell of burnt fur.
Whatever this creature had become, it was beyond him.
Even with all the power he had right now, going toe to toe without giving everything he had wouldn't be enough.

[Rampage]
[Magical Strike]
[Berserker]
The night went purple as the red tint of his vision and the blue light of the moon mixed.
Whatever had happened to him, the cat seemed to realize something had changed, but there was nothing it could do.
It had committed to attacking, and Max was standing toe to toe with it, parrying and evading each strike.
Then he had a turn.
His mind didn’t need him to do much beyond unleash everything he felt.
All the pain and anger of being trapped.
Not seeing Tanila or even knowing if she was okay left a burning pit in his soul.
Wondering what had happened to his Faction with him gone made Max fearful each day of someone retaliating and undoing all the hard work he had put in.
Every ounce of that fueled him now.
The first strike was planned, slicing off the creature's front paw and then the next leg at the joint.
His blade shattered upon the impact with the bones of its knee, yet it didn’t matter.
So much power was directed that it sent those pieces like shrapnel into the night sky.
The wooden shaft was still good, apparently stronger than the metal itself, and Max used it like a spear, ramming it upward into the beast throat as he leaped upward.
It pierced the soft tissue, driving through the cat’s jaw, and cracked the skull portion underneath.
No real cry came as the beast attempted to pull back, stumbling without half a leg and missing a paw.
Max let it fall, pulling his staff free, and he then unleashed strike after strike against the demon cat.
Thrusts took out pieces of its flesh, punctured a lung, and finally found a heart.
The cat fell into convulsions, and a gurgled cry came from the cat’s mouth before Max moved from beside the beast and jumped onto its side as it fell over.
His weapon sounded like thunder, loud cracks reverberating off the walls of the stone cliffs.
Yet each time, the weapon hit with his desired outcome. No attack was random or consumed by rage.

In this moment, in this quiet place, his skill had changed, and Max was the master of it.
One well-placed strike split the skull, exposing a pulsing piece of brain.
He drove the wood forward, the blood and gore covered stick sliding through his hands as he used his hips for power.
Darkness hit him as it felt like lightning came from the heavens and ravaged every nerve in his body.
Before he passed out, Max saw the words for a moment.
[Consume has Consumed… System Error]

9 Chapter 283

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1903152/chapter-283 2024-11-15

Max couldn't help but smile as he raced across the sand, their shapes illuminated by the blue glow of the moon.
His new companion, Aimee, screamed for only about twenty seconds, which didn't matter, as he ran in the direction each of them had pointed for five miles before angling back toward the stone cliffs.
"What are you?! Who are you!?"
Aimee was backing away after being set down on the flat rock surface, her black eyes reflecting the fireball Max had summoned upon reaching there. She tugged at her robe and moved closer toward the sheer stone wall.
"I won't hurt you, I promise," Max replied as he held out his free hand toward her.
"Why would I rescue you and then do something…"
He stopped talking, realizing that perhaps for her this might be exactly what she was thinking.
Trying to smile, Max gave her some room, watching as she glanced in both directions.
"If you want to go, I won't stop you. I… I heard you or your friend scream, and I couldn't—"
"She wasn't my friend!" Aimee snapped. "I mean… she was just…"
Her facial skin was tight as her jaw clamped shut, both nostrils flaring out a bit as she breathed. A shudder came, and then an unexpected bow was given.
"I was sold as a slave, just like her. We were deemed… worthless."
Aimee's voice went hollow as she stared at the dark stone ground.
"You wouldn't understand. You have power. I don't."
Max let go of his sack, letting it fall as he took a seat and sat cross-legged, looking up at her.
"I wasn't strong once… People tried to kill me," Max replied, wincing as he relived all those memories. "I was hunted, betrayed, and finally found some friends. They became a family, and just when I thought I was strong enough to protect them…"
Sighing, Max saw that Aimee's eyes were locked on his.
"The hunter or as those warriors said, *Death of the worst kind* , brought me here. Held me for months and has released me. I have only a few days left to get as far away as possible from him. After that, he will start to track me down again."
Aimee's eyes widened, and she slowly sat down, blinking rapidly as she appeared to be studying his face.
"You were weak? Like me?"
Snorting, Max shrugged.

“I wanted to be a baker, just someone who made bread and cake.”
“What is cake?” Aimee asked as she cocked her head.
“Bread that is sweet and has a creamy layer on the outside,” Max replied, using his hands to best mimic what he said.
“Oh. You mean *bunakamea* . We have something like that, but it is very expensive. Not many can make it well, and the items needed to make are not cheap.”
“Perhaps one day I can make you some. For now, I need to know a few things about where I am and what this world is like.”
Shifting a little, Aimee’s jaw dropped.
“You are from another world!? I knew it! There are very few like you, and all have power!”
He watched her reactions, and heard the shock in her voice.
Some sounds came from down the stone area in the direction they would be heading.
Aimee jumped to her feet, hissing as she stared into the darkness.
“We should go… those are… *demon cats* .”
Max stood, puzzled by the word he heard in his head.
“They are dangerous?”
She nodded.
“Very. Even those fools would struggle to face them with that cave. Out here, with nowhere to run, they would be cut down. That is why the Stone Masters carve those caves. Some are higher, and some are on the ground. Can you move stone as well?”
Max tried to understand what Aimee was asking, but he sent the fireball higher into the sky, watching the ball of flame illuminate the rock surface.
About forty feet up was a hole in the mountain about a quarter of a mile away that he could make out.
Loud cries, almost sounding like a child or a woman screaming echoed along the stone walls.
“They see the light! They will come! It is too high for us to reach that!”
Aimee was starting to back away, glancing in the direction they had come.
“Perhaps we can return to the cave, fight with them. Surely—”
“We’ll be fine. I’m going to carry you again, so hold still.”
“How will we—”
Max smiled as he grabbed his bag and quickly picked up Aimee once more, running toward the wall and leaping into the air when he was close.
His angle and height was good—with the strength in his legs, the forty feet wasn’t much of an issue—but even then, he summoned a wall of air, laughing as his new companion screamed as they turned midair, jumping into the cave.
“What if someone was in here!” she exclaimed as Max set her down.
“There wasn’t, I already checked,” Max replied, dropping his pack once more.
His Sonar had told him the cave was about twenty feet deep and that no one or anything was inside it.
The fireball hung outside still, providing a little bit of light to see.
More cries came, and with each, a sensation of pain and suffering that wanted to tug at his soul.
Aimee fell to the floor, pulled her knees up, and hugged them, slowly rocking.
“Are you ok?”
She whimpered and shook her head.
“I’m weak. Worthless. Deemed unworthy to be given a stone, to be given power. My —”
A sudden cry cut her off, and Max turned to look over the edge, seeing movement coming toward where his fireball was.
“Are you safe up here?”
“Yes… they cannot climb this high, and… wait, why did you ask if I was safe?”
Grinning, Max gave her a wink, though he was certain she missed it in the darkness.
“I’m going to go fight them.”
“Please don’t! If you die, I’ll be stuck here!”
Max pulled the weapon from the bag and spun it quickly.

[Inspect Weapon]
[System type does not match current system… Translating…]
*****
Well Crafted Naginata
*****
Well damn… no stats? How am I supposed to know how good this is?
“Aimee, I’ll be back, but one last question. Will this blade cut those creatures?”
“Ye… yes.”
Casting Lightning on his weapon, Max grinned.
“Don’t move, I’ll be back.”
He took a step, falling down from the entrance, and landed on the ground, making a thud as he hit, but his body easily handled that kind of impact.
Lowering the fireball, he began to infuse more mana into it and also summoned his familiar.
As shadows appeared from the light, the rocks and small boulders that were strewn around, Max heard the cry again and felt the pain in his chest, knowing whatever it was had to be some kind of ability or attack.
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Each one took a turn as they moved within fifty yards, crying out with a horrible sound like someone torturing a child, which echoed off the walls.
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Each one was about the same size of a horse, fur now visible as they got within thirty-five yards. Liquid dripped from their teeth, and Max groaned, not sure whether it was simply drool or something else.
Standing near the stone wall, Max waited, watching as the seven surrounded him, none moving closer than twenty yards as they all waited till each was exactly the same distance.
Ready to see what they could do, Max feinted an attack to the right, sending his fireball at the one on the left.
The one he moved toward backed up, while the one on the left immediately started to move forward with the others, finding a ball of flame half its size now racing toward it.
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Not sure what would happen if all seven joined together, Max started casting Fire Nova, moving toward the one on his right, watching as it dodged backward, vanishing right before his weapon struck.
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Max spun, swinging with his weapon, the distance gone in a second.

The one closest to him cried out as the weapon cut its chest, the long, curved blade slicing till it struck bone, sending the cat flying toward the sand.
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Whatever this creature had become, it was beyond him.
Even with all the power he had right now, going toe to toe without giving everything he had wouldn't be enough.
[Rampage]
[Magical Strike]
[Berserker]
The night went purple as the red tint of his vision and the blue light of the moon mixed.
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Then he had a turn.
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Max let it fall, pulling his staff free, and he then unleashed strike after strike against the demon cat.
Thrusts took out pieces of its flesh, punctured a lung, and finally found a heart.
The cat fell into convulsions, and a gurgled cry came from the cat’s mouth before Max moved from beside the beast and jumped onto its side as it fell over.
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He drove the wood forward, the blood and gore covered stick sliding through his hands as he used his hips for power.
Darkness hit him as it felt like lightning came from the heavens and ravaged every nerve in his body.
Before he passed out, Max saw the words for a moment.
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9-1 Free Month of Patreon - Happy Holidays! 150 Up for grabs! https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1903402/free-month-of-patreon-happy-holidays-150-up-for 2024-11-15

So - I'm in currently in Las Vegas (well actually heading home - waiting at airport) and went to Author Nation.

It was a great week, learned some valuable stuff and still managed to write 5+ chapters while here (working on chapter 367 atm).

While there, i was informed that I could do patreon gifting and so I wanted to do a 'thank you' test run for the holidays.

The link in the author notes will work for up to 150 people and gives you a free month. As of this post chapter 292 is up!

So maybe you get lucky and get one! Keep an eye out, I'll do a few more also!

Thanks again for all the love!

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

150 Free Patreon Memberships! [expired]

9-2 Wow! SO Many Requests - SO here are more free memberships!

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1904174/wow-so-many-requests-so-here-are-more-free-memberships 2024-11-15

Okay... I was slightly blown away by the number of messages I had sitting in my mailbox when I returned from Author Nation today.

My plane landed and 'bam' people were asking if they could get a free month of Patreon as it appears the link got clicked by a lot more people than I had expected or imagined!

So hopefully this is enough for everyone who is looking!

Those of you who reached out and msged me how much you loved the story and ***really*** wanted to see what happens next... This one's for you!

PAT 10 284 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 284**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389349 2024-11-01; https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1905078/chapter-284 2024-11-20;

Chapter 284
Lights swirled around him, and Max could sense things were different than he had ever felt before.
You have drawn some attention to yourself. It couldn’t be helped, and it isn’t your fault.
The voice was something he had missed, and Max blinked, getting his vision to return, and saw that next to him in the darkness he was floating in was his doppelganger.
You’re ok! I wondered what had happened!
I have tried to figure out how to remove the necklace that binds you, but it appears I may not be able to. Doing so has locked me in a state where I cannot reply or do much. Even now I am only able to talk because you are here.
Where is here?
His clone pointed around them.

We are in the system. You should be gone in a moment, but I can feel eyes upon us. Tell me you can as well.
Max nodded, sensing the very presence of multiple *beings* or something else watching him.
I'm not certain who it is, but you should be safe. Until you climb the tower, you are not touchable by many. I need to—
Both of them felt pain in their heads, silence taking over, and the darkness came again.
***
His Sonar told him he was on the ground, blood pooling everywhere, and he was caked in it.
Grunting, Max stood up, his brain felt like Batrire had used it as a drum for a while.
Then he saw the notifications waiting on him.
[Bonus Points Consumed]
[20 Strength Consumed]
[20 Endurance Consumed]
[20 Dexterity Consumed]
[20 Intelligence Consumed]
[20 Wisdom Consumed]
[Stat Milestone 1 Reached]
[Wisdom of 250 acquired]
[Bonus Mana regeneration granted - 25% regeneration increase]
[Bonus resistance to Mental effects - 20% increase to Mental Defense]
[439 Demonic Souls Consumed]
[Consume has Consumed… System Error]
[0hKakor801….]
[Entity Does Not Match Current Planet Type]
[Skill Transference Does Not Match Entity Type]
[Skill Cannot Convert to Entity Type]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Max Hoste Has Been Marked]
[Potential Skill Conflicts Analysis Beginning]
[……]
[……]
[……]
[8 Skills Detected That –]
[Consume has Overridden Analysis]
[……]
[……]
[Analysis Complete]
[No Skill Changes Required]
Max felt overwhelmed at what he was reading.
Somehow his slaying of this demonic cat had not only gained him an insane amount of stats, but it also had caused him to be marked.
What does marked mean?
Nothing came from his skill, and sighing, Max turned to the real question of the moment.
[Simple Base Stats Check]
*****
STR: 407
DEX: 430
CON: 395
INT: 271
WIS: 267
*****
"Goblin shite… that's a lot of points."

His body felt amazing. Even with his back and side covered in the blood that looked blue, Max couldn't argue with the growth he had achieved.
"Max?!"
"I'm fine, Aimee! How are you?"
"How… how did you kill that? I saw…"
Her voice trailed off, and Max wasn't sure whether she could see him in the darkness, so he summoned a fireball and sent it up toward the entrance of the cave.
"Stand back. I'm going to come back up."
Moving, Max gave a small jog and jumped, grabbing on to the opening with both hands and easily pulling himself inside the cave.
Immediately he saw Aimee's eyes widen, and she moved to where he was, trying to turn him and inspect him.
"You're covered in blood! Are you okay?"
"It's not mine," Max replied. "I'm fine. Now tell me, will I need to worry about anything coming and eating that tonight?"
Unable to say anything, Aimee stood there, jaw opened and eyes still wide as she shook her head.
"So we can sleep here? Safely?"
She snorted, a speck of snot escaping, which Max deftly dodged.
Max wasn't certain, but had he imagined her scales all turned a slightly different color for a moment?
"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that!"
"You're fine," Max replied and then stretched, letting out a yawn. "If you don't mind, I'd like to sleep a little bit, and then we can talk a little in the morning before heading to the city."
Aimee stood there silent as Max moved to the back of the cave, taking the pack he had dropped and using it as a pillow while he lounged.
He could feel her watching him, not moving from where he had left her.
Opening his eyes, Max stared down the twenty feet and pointed at the fireball outside.
"I'll need to cancel that. If you want, you can move closer inside. I promise that I won't do anything to you."
He could sense her swallowing, and she nodded, taking a few more steps in before curling up on the floor against a wall.
"Good night," Max said as he let the fireball vanish.
No reply came, but Max didn't care. He was tired, and there was too much in his head at this moment.
***
Already, the suns were rising, and the desert was starting to radiate with heat.
"You're certain you don't mind?"
"If you say you need to visit your home, then I don't want to say no. You promised to help me get to the main town, Quan Ma, so I don't see why I can't make a small detour."
"But the one hunting you? Can you afford it?"
Shrugging, Max gave the corpse one last glance.
He had taken a few claws, but there wasn't much more he could do. Sure, the fangs looked nice and useful, but the truth was his bag smelled, and he had no idea how much longer it would hold together. Already, it was starting to tear, and he had removed a few items to keep the weight down.
"I'm not the kind of person to turn down helping someone. Now tell me which way to go, and we'll head there."
Aimee closed her eyes and turned slowly, stopping till she was pointing farther away from the wall and into the never-ending sand.
"How can you do that?"
"You can't? Surely in your world everyone always knows which way their home is."
Wincing, Max shook his head.

I’m not sure I even know where home is anymore… Mom… Dad… Stacy… I hope you’re alright.
He could see the look of sadness on Aimee’s face.
“I cannot imagine not always knowing which way I must go…”
“Then let’s not wait any longer,” Max replied, putting a smile on. “You’ll just have to be willing to endure being carried.”
Rubbing her stomach, Aimee nodded.
“I can’t say it's pleasant, but I doubt many have ever moved as fast as you do.”
Smiling, Max grabbed his bag and bent down, holding out an arm.
“Let’s get you a little more comfortable.”
***
Hours passed, and Max stopped a few times, giving a tiny chip of ice to Aimee, letting her cool off from the water and sending more down her head as it melted from the sun.
A pair of red snakes had appeared while they were resting, each about forty feet in length, and Max was about to attack them when Aimee told him not to.
“Watch!”
She began to thrum, holding out her hands and making a trilling and thrumming noise from her throat.
Soon the pair turned toward them, slithering across the sand with ease.
Max stood behind Aimee, wondering if this was a good idea, but when both came and stopped about ten yards away, his companion bowed, motioning Max to join her.
Bending at his waist, he could feel the snakes respond, a presence they had been exuding vanishing, and their armored skin took on a deeper red color.
“We can now touch them. Can you summon another piece of ice for each?”
Max nodded, slowly creating a shard and a spear, handing one to Aimee who moved to the snake on the left.
He could hear her speaking in a clicking and other sound, yet none of it translated.
The snake opened its mouth, and she put the ice inside, crunching coming for a moment before a trill like the one Aimee had made earlier was made.
“It's your turn. Just stand there. I’ll do the talking.”
Max nodded and moved slowly to where the one on the left was.
Once more Aimee made the same noises as she came near him, and Max put the tiny spear of ice into the snake's mouth when it opened.
It crunched the ice and then made a similar trilling noise.
“You can touch them. Scratch the side right outside their jaws.”
Max had to admit as the pair of white eyes stared at him and a forked tongue flicked out from the snake, he wasn’t certain rubbing a random snake in the wild was on his to-do list.
Still he followed Aimee’s lead and heard another trill coming from the creature before a sound came from the south.
Both snakes slowly slithered and moved back.
A hissing sound came, and Aimee replied, it appeared.
“What is it?”
“We need to go. A sandstorm has been reported, and they are relaying the message across the land.”
As she spoke the pair rose up and sent out a high-pitched sound that reverberated in his chest.
“How bad is this storm?”
Each snake turned and began to burrow into the ground.
“Bad. You’ll need to run fast or we… well, I’ll have the hide stripped from my skin if we get caught in it. I think we’re close enough to my village to reach it in time.”
Max nodded, moved to get his pack and then let Aimee get into position.
“We’re closer. I can feel it.”
Preparing to run, Max turned in the direction the snakes had been relaying from and saw that the sky was dark out there.
Without waiting he took off, leaving a trail of dust and sand behind him.

***
Loud crashes of lightning and thunder came as the wall of sand behind them grew.
Cursing, Max knew that the storm was already ahead of them and he needed to find this village Aimee had said was near, or they would need to turn and run somewhere else.
“Keep going! We’re very close!”
All he could see was the sand, and the stinging of the wind didn’t bother him, but he could smell and sense the blood that had started to eat at the hide of his companion.
She didn’t cry out, and yet he could feel her wincing as gusts of wind sent sand that tore at them.
His eyes were closed, using Sonar to keep him from tripping, and even then the storm was causing problems.
“How much more!” Max shouted.
“Fi–five minutes at your pace?”
The wind wailed loudly, and Max knew she wasn’t going to make five more minutes as each second tore at her.
Coming to a halt, he dropped his bag and set her down before him, using his body to shield whatever he could.
“What?! Why have you stopped?!”
Her words seemed so quiet even though he knew she was shouting, each word being swept away by the wind.
Dumping the stomach out, Max covered her with it, making sure to use the side that faced out.
“Forgive me!”
Grabbing Aimee, he picked her up, leaving a small hole near the top where she could breathe, and carried her like a child.
“Which way!”
A hand popped out from inside the bag, pointing in the direction they needed to go.
[Haste]
Once more, she screamed, not because of the pain of the sand but because of how he had forgotten to build up speed.
There wasn’t time, and as much as Max hated losing all the stuff he had collected, it was worthless if she lost her life.
It had been hard running in the sand, each step sinking from the fresh deposit that came from the storm, but now he barely touched it at all.
“Two… no one… no… SLOW DOWN!”
Max immediately began to slow down, and saw shapes beginning to form as he cracked his eyes.
There before them a wall came into view.
Is that glass?
Dark colored glass surrounded a city, and Max didn’t hesitate, seeing that it was only twenty five feet high. He leaped upward, using a single wall of air to adjust himself in the blowing wind, and came down on the other side.
Aimee’s head wiggled free from the bag as they touched down on the sand inside the walls, the assault of the storm not yet having made an impact in the village.
Each building was a dark, almost black form of glass, unable to be peered through.
“There! Go that way! My home is there!”
Max nodded, and they ran through the empty streets of a small village, no one else around.
Soon, they stood before a small house, smaller than the rest.
Max set her down, and Aimee pounded on the door the moment she was free of the sack.
“Mom! It’s me, Mom! It’s One Who is Angry!”
Unable to help himself, Max chuckled at the translation that came through, wondering what her name really was.
The sound of things moving behind the door could be felt by Max as the vibrations of things being shifted.

The black glass door opened, and a lizard woman with multiple scars on her face and scales that looked to have been ripped off opened the door, eyes filled with tears.
Aimee rushed forward, almost tackling the woman.
Hating that he wasn't invited, Max could feel the sand picking up as it came over the walls and moved inside, shutting the door behind him as a pair of eyes that were milky white stared at nothing.
"Who is with you? Why does he smell like death?"

11 Chapter 285

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1910617/chapter-285 2025-01-16;

Chapter 285
She is blind...
There was no light in the room. Darkness was present, and yet Max didn't notice at first, his Sonar skill having given him the layout of everything.
Only in the brief moment the door was open and he had seen Aimee's mother did Max notice the eyes.
"He is a friend. He… his name is Max, and he saved me from those…"
Her voice changed, taking on a tone and language similar to when she had conversed with the two red snakes.
Max could sense the older woman backing up slightly, clinging to Aimee's arm with her hand.
When she finished speaking, Max felt a twinge of pain in his stomach as the older woman dropped to the floor immediately.
"I owe you everything. If my life has value, it is yours to possess."
Moving forward slowly, Max summoned a small fireball, letting it illuminate the dark glass building, watching Aimee as she squinted.
He put his hand on the woman's shoulder, amazed that she didn't flinch at all.
"You owe me nothing. My mother raised me to care for all life, and she would not allow me to claim ownership of another."
A single tear came from those milky white eyes, and the woman nodded, lifting a hand and putting it on Max's.
She froze the moment hers touched his skin.
"He… you're not… daughter, what have you done?"
Trembling, the older lizard woman began to slide backward on the ground, escaping Max's grasp as she put a hand out before she hit a rickety chair. Using it she stood, moving around the chair and hiding behind it like it was a shield of some kind.
"He has no fur! No scales! He is a smooth skin!"
Aimee rushed to where her mother was, then reached out and grabbed her hand, which clutched the chair, small nails digging into the dark wood.
"Mother… he is a guest, and Max saved me! Do not treat him like this! Where is our honor? Power and strength is everything, and he has so much. He has—"
Ripping her hand from Aimee's, the older woman shook her head, pointing a finger in the direction she believed Max was standing.
"No! They always bring death! You know the stories! They trick us! All have lured us to—"
"He wears a collar!"
Aimee's shout echoed in the small room, only about an eight-by-eight area, drowning out the loud wind that was howling outside.
Five seconds passed without any sound except the storm as the older woman stood there, jaw open and the skin around her neck slack.
"A collar… who would put one on him?"
"The one we do not mention past the sand, jungle, and rivers."

I swear there is nothing worse than people talking about you while you're standing here...
Listening to the two of them, Max couldn't help but wonder what people he assumed were like himself had done to this place. It wasn't long ago that he had learned of gods sometimes sending others to different planets to gain power.
Are gods sending their people here? Is there a...
"Aimee… is there a tower here? Something that rises to the sky?"
Both women turned and looked in his direction as Max changed the subject.
"There is one, but only a few chosen ones are allowed inside. If Igarra determines one is worthy, she allows them to enter the tower. She is also the one who runs the games."
"Games?"
Nodding, Aimee didn't reply but instead gently coaxed her mother to the chair and helped her sit down.
"There are gladiator tournaments that happen on a regular basis. So many different creatures and beings compete. I have never seen them, but the rumors are that she even commands dragons who fight for her pleasure."
Max felt the hair on his neck rise up at hearing about someone powerful enough to control dragons.
"Who is she… I mean, what is this woman?"
Laughter came from Aimee's mom. She shook her head and wagged a scaled finger in Max's direction.
"She is Igarra. First of her Claw! Slayer of Iron Scale and Clutched from Suljin herself!"
"Suljin?"
A low growl came from the woman whose house he was standing in.
Squeezing her mother's shoulder, Aimee said something again in a language his ring didn't translate.
"Forgive her. Suljin is our mother. All of my people come from her. She is what you would call a god."
"She is THE god!"
"I mean no disrespect," Max replied. "Forgive me. I have only been free from my cage for almost seven days. Everything about this world is new, and I am grateful for your daughter providing me with a path here. Just as I am grateful for you providing me shelter from the storm outside."
Wishing he still had everything that had been in his bag, Max let out a groan when he realized it had been left outside.
"Forgive me, or I would have brought a gift."
A chuckle came, and Aimee gave her mother a gentle shove.
"He saved me from the sandstorm, Mother. He runs faster than any we have ever known. Even when the storm was upon us, Max dropped all of the items he had in his pack to wrap me with it and carry me like you once did when I was little."
Cocking her head to the side, the older woman blinked a few times and then finally nodded.
"Very well. I still owe you for saving my daughter. I do not have much, but you are welcome to it. All the water I have is stale, and I'm afraid I haven't had a fire going in a while."
Max chuckled and pointed to the ball of flame in the air, causing Aimee to laugh.
"What is so funny?"
"He is able to control fire and has a small ball of flame hanging near our roof. I will get the tin set up, and he can start a fire."
Once again, the older woman's jaw went slack, and Aimee began to move around the place, peering into another room before grunting and heading into it.
"Able to control flames…"
"And summon water so cold it can freeze your tongue!" Aimee shouted from the other room.

Grinning, Max didn't care that the older lizard woman couldn't see his smile. Had he wanted, he could have put his whole fist in her mouth due to how open it was right then.
***
"I have not tasted water this fresh in… since I was about your age."
Aimee nodded as she ladled another cup of water to her mother, filling the outstretched glass.
Max studied the mug he held, marveling at the glass it was made of. It was, like the building, a dark glass, and even after clinking it a few times against the floor, it did not chip.
"One of our villagers is responsible for making the houses and other objects. She has the power to control sand. Most would never dishonor her, or she might remove one's home."
"Do all the women get angry easily?"
Both of them laughed, and Aimee even snorted, her nostrils flaring.
"Not many men would be brave enough or foolish enough to ask that question around one woman, let alone two," she replied. "Many of us are temperamental. The men often do the hunting and care for the young, depending on the power their mate has."
"Are the men not strong?"
Laughter came from Aimee's mom as she shook her head before taking another sip of the warm water.
"It is not that our men are not strong but that we women are much stronger. There was a time…"
Her free hand began to trace the scars on her face, stopping before her eyes and then let out a sigh.
"I was overly ambitious… I challenged another and lost. The fact I was left alive was done so that my… Aimee as you call her, would perhaps get a chance to regain the honor I lost. It appears Suljin has become angry with me, as she still has no power of her own."
"How does one get power? For your people?"
"We take it."
Max was surprised at the matter-of-fact response and tone from the older woman.
"How?"
Sighing, she took another sip and ran a finger along the cup.
"There are many ways to gain power. Orbs, crystals, potions, and even the hearts of some foes can grant our people strength and… magic, as you called it. Acquiring those things is difficult, and while our men can gain power through fighting and killing things without needing those items, the women must have them. Often, a male will bring a gift, an offering to procure our hand. If we deem it a worthy gift, we accept it, using the power from that to travel with them, growing stronger together. In time, our mate will fall behind, becoming weaker than we are and will stay home to care for our offspring."
Max watched as Aimee said nothing, occasionally bobbing her head, but never taking her eyes off her mother.
"My partner was strong. He was one I respected, and the gift he gave… oh, it made me so powerful."
Her grip squeezed against the glass cup, and for a moment, Max wondered if she might break it.
"I became too overcome with greed. I tried to reach the moon above, and I wanted to pursue the tower. That was my downfall."
"Did you ever step inside it?"
Scoffing, the woman shook her head.
"No… Igarra gave me a quest… I failed it and as such was stripped of my power. She took it from me. She then…"
A lump appeared in the older woman's throat as she coughed and drank the last of her drink.

“She sent me back here. When I returned, broken and weak, my partner left me… leaving my daughter to care for me. Since then… no one has offered her anything.”
Sniffling, the woman was almost unable to be heard as she whispered, “She has become cursed like me.”
“How can we get Aimee one of these items?”
Wiping her snout, which had gotten a little wet, the older woman shook her head.
“That would be impossible. Without any tokens to trade, and having lost whatever items you once had, earning them is…”
She set her cup down on the small table near her, slid down from her seat, and began to slide across the room on her knees, her old and worn robe dragging on the floor.
“You could go to Quan Ma! You could fight in the tournaments! Tokens could be earned, and you could surely find someone to remove the collar and buy my daughter something that would grant her power!”
“Mom!”
Max ignored the look on Aimee’s face. It was hard to read because the facial features were different, but she was blinking rapidly, and her nostrils were expanding almost just as fast.
“How dangerous are these fights?”
“Max, you can’t! Some people die! The stories I’ve heard tell of horrible beasts and opponents!”
“Yet you say he killed a pack of demon cats!” her mother exclaimed. “There is no doubt he could easily win a few fights!”
Running his hand through the hair on his head, Max chuckled as the sand filled mess reminded him that he had changed so much in the last week.
“Aimee, I need to go to the city, and if tokens are required to purchase my freedom from this collar, then I will say that I don’t have much choice. Tomorrow, we have to leave anyway. The one who is hunting me will start tomorrow… if he hasn’t already.”
Grunting, Aimee glared at her mother who was still on her knees before Max.
“Mother, you dishonor me. You might as well ask if he will father my clutch!”
Max felt his cheeks go red at the potential idea of all that, and Aimee turned to see how his skin had changed colors.
“Are you ok? I have never seen your skin turn that red before.”
“Perhaps it is a mating trick! Designed to lure you closer!”
Groaning, Max ignored both women, who now seemed interested in the color of his skin, while he tried to ignore the timer he felt running out.
Tomorrow… I need to get away from here.
Looking at the two of them and how Aimee now stared at him a bit differently, Max stood up and gave a bow.
“If you don’t mind, I need to rest a little before the trip tomorrow. That corner over there will work just fine.”
A chuckle came from behind him, and Max was grateful that he couldn’t understand whatever words were spoken in the language those two were using.
Tanila would kill me if she thought I sired a brood of lizard kids.

PAT 11 285 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 285**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389487 2024-11-04;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1910617/chapter-285 2024-11-20;

She is blind…

There was no light in the room. Darkness was present, and yet Max didn’t notice at first, his Sonar skill having given him the layout of everything.

Only in the brief moment the door was open and he had seen Aimee’s mother did Max notice the eyes.

“He is a friend. He… his name is Max, and he saved me from those…”

Her voice changed, taking on a tone and language similar to when she had conversed with the two red snakes.

Max could sense the older woman backing up slightly, clinging to Aimee’s arm with her hand.

When she finished speaking, Max felt a twinge of pain in his stomach as the older woman dropped to the floor immediately.

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“Very well. I still owe you for saving my daughter. I do not have much, but you are welcome to it. All the water I have is stale, and I’m afraid I haven’t had a fire going in a while.”

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***

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“It is not that our men are not strong but that we women are much stronger. There was a time…”

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“I was overly ambitious… I challenged another and lost. The fact I was left alive was done so that my… Aimee as you call her, would perhaps get a chance to regain the honor I lost. It appears Suljin has become angry with me, as she still has no power of her own.”

“How does one get power? For your people?”

“We take it.”

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worthy gift, we accept it, using the power from that to travel with them, growing stronger together. In time, our mate will fall behind, becoming weaker than we are and will stay home to care for our offspring."

Max watched as Aimee said nothing, occasionally bobbing her head, but never taking her eyes off her mother.

"My partner was strong. He was one I respected, and the gift he gave… oh, it made me so powerful."

Her grip squeezed against the glass cup, and for a moment, Max wondered if she might break it.

"I became too overcome with greed. I tried to reach the moon above, and I wanted to pursue the tower. That was my downfall."

"Did you ever step inside it?"

Scoffing, the woman shook her head.

"No… Igarra gave me a quest… I failed it and as such was stripped of my power. She took it from me. She then…"

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"She sent me back here. When I returned, broken and weak, my partner left me… leaving my daughter to care for me. Since then… no one has offered her anything."

Sniffling, the woman was almost unable to be heard as she whispered, "She has become cursed like me."

"How can we get Aimee one of these items?"

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"That would be impossible. Without any tokens to trade, and having lost whatever items you once had, earning them is…"

She set her cup down on the small table near her, slid down from her seat, and began to slide across the room on her knees, her old and worn robe dragging on the floor.

“You could go to Quan Ma! You could fight in the tournaments! Tokens could be earned, and you could surely find someone to remove the collar and buy my daughter something that would grant her power!”

“Mom!”

Max ignored the look on Aimee’s face. It was hard to read because the facial features were different, but she was blinking rapidly, and her nostrils were expanding almost just as fast.

“How dangerous are these fights?”

“Max, you can’t! Some people die! The stories I’ve heard tell of horrible beasts and opponents!”

“Yet you say he killed a pack of demon cats!” her mother exclaimed. “There is no doubt he could easily win a few fights!”

Running his hand through the hair on his head, Max chuckled as the sand filled mess reminded him that he had changed so much in the last week.

“Aimee, I need to go to the city, and if tokens are required to purchase my freedom from this collar, then I will say that I don’t have much choice. Tomorrow, we have to leave anyway. The one who is hunting me will start tomorrow… if he hasn’t already.”

Grunting, Aimee glared at her mother who was still on her knees before Max.

“Mother, you dishonor me. You might as well ask if he will father my clutch!”

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“Perhaps it is a mating trick! Designed to lure you closer!”

Groaning, Max ignored both women, who now seemed interested in the color of his skin, while he tried to ignore the timer he felt running out.

Tomorrow… I need to get away from here.

Looking at the two of them and how Aimee now stared at him a bit differently, Max stood up and gave a bow.

“If you don’t mind, I need to rest a little before the trip tomorrow. That corner over there will work just fine.”

A chuckle came from behind him, and Max was grateful that he couldn’t understand whatever words were spoken in the language those two were using.

Tanila would kill me if she thought I sired a brood of lizard kids.

12 Chapter 286

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1912533/chapter-286 2024-11-21;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/98293/friendly-fyre-cozy-kingdom-building-litrpg]

Chapter 286
“Who is this one who stands behind you? Why does he have a collar, and how do you expect to keep me from taking him?”
Max tried to not interfere. It was getting increasingly difficult as the crowd grew to about forty-plus lizard people.
Before Aimee stood a lizard woman who wore bands of leather wrapped around her body and tail. It was adorned with multiple shards of the sand glass, each one looking sharper than any object he had held yet.
“I have already told you, One Who Pierces Your Heart, this one is with me. I owe him and must lead him to Quan Ma.”
Chuckles came, and a few thrums reverberated from the crowd.
“The rumor is you were sold as a slave, and now you have returned, leading one of his kind, bound in a collar, and you expect me to let him just leave?! Do not think that I will hesitate to end your life, or worse yet, make you blind like your mother while I drag him behind me to Igarra!”
Max watched as the one he had finally figured out was called Kaurma pushed herself against Aimee, towering over her by a few inches, making her move back in the sand.
“Do not do that again,” Max said, letting the growl in his voice be heard by all.
“Touch her once more, and I will strip the hide off you like I did the demon cats.”
Every head snapped in Max’s direction, and a murmur came, all in that same language he couldn’t understand, but Kaurma scoffed, moving to the side of Aimee and bared her teeth at Max.
“You dare talk to me like that?! I will strip your skin and make our healer heal you over and over until you beg me to let you call me master!”
Max sensed the crowd beginning to back up, felt the daggers that were set in leather sheaths vibrate slightly as the woman appeared to be smiling.
Or maybe she is smirking.
“Max, don’t—”

He didn’t wait.
Before anyone could react, Max summoned an ice prison, and the woman’s eyes started to bulge as it crept up her legs and tail.
Shards of glass came free from her outfit, all moving toward Max in an instant.
His wall of air came before him, causing them to bounce off, watching the sand controller struggle to understand why they had stopped for a moment.
Each second had the ice rising faster, and Max summoned an ice spear, placing it near the woman’s face.
Her daggers began to move around the sides of the walls, causing the other lizard men and woman nearby to leap out of the way, trying to not get cut by the flying shards.
Max summoned a wall of stone and ice on each side, smiling as they buried themselves inside his protective barrier.
“My weapon won’t miss, and your time is almost up. Drop your daggers and surrender, or I promise you, I won’t miss.”
She hissed, retracting them from the walls and sending her shards of glass at him, causing them to chip off pieces as they collided.
A shape appeared behind him, rising from the sand, a scimitar in its hand.
Max spun, one hand grabbing the weapon hand, the other his attacker by the throat.
Eyes bulged from the male lizard, his red and black pattern of scales accentuating his yellow skin.
“She’s not worth it. You don’t want to do this.”
Squeezing his hand, Max felt the wrist snap, and he tossed the warrior back, sending him about fifteen yards and into a wall of a house.
Two daggers came around the back, and Max sighed.
His ice spear moved forward, piercing the heart and chest of the woman he had imprisoned.
Both of his hands came up, catching the glass blades, which sliced his skin, almost shearing his fingers off as he held them in place, slowing down their attack.
[Regeneration]
Suddenly the power behind them stopped, and a cold blast of power came through him.
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Sand Mastery]?]
[Yes / No]
He wanted to click yes, but the thought of gaining a skill right now and not knowing how it might impact him made the choice to wait easy.
Gasps and groans came as the people around him backed away further.
“You killed her,” Aimee muttered. “She… she was so strong, and you… like she was a child.”
Dropping both shards of glass, Max watched as his blood dripped onto the brown sand. Soon the gashes sealed themselves, and any chance of not impressing Aimee more went out the window as she watched his hands repair before her very own eyes.
“I told her. She ignored me and then crossed the line.”
Max’s voice had no anger, but it carried the tone of metal on metal.
He scanned the crowd, dismissing the stone and ice wall.
“She had a chance, and she dishonored me and my friend. If anyone else would like to think they can keep me as a slave, let them try now.”
No one in the center of town where they had gathered moved.
“Good. Now before someone makes a mistake, let me say this. I plan on returning, and that woman,” Max said as he pointed at Aimee’s mother, “she is under my protection. If I find out someone has harmed her, I will hunt them and their family down, not stopping till each and every one of them is dead.”
Max heard his own voice and was surprised by how it sounded.
Why am I so angry?

Not allowing himself to show his confusion, he took a deep breath and let it out slowly.
“We need to go.”
Aimee nodded and moved to the dead woman. Digging through Kaurma’s clothes, she collected a small pouch that clinked, causing his companion to smile as she moved toward him.
“I’m ready.”
Nodding, Max held out his arms, and she jumped into them with a laugh.
“Remember,” he said as he slowly spun around, glaring at each person still there. “Hurt her and you will wish you had never been born.”
Like the wind, Max vanished, moving so fast many were not able to see him move.
***
“That was amazing!”
Max only nodded, frowning to himself inside.
Why… I reacted so quickly. Sure, there was only one choice, but if I had shown my power would Kaurma have backed down? Did I need to kill her?
A decision was still waiting for him, and Max slowed down before coming to a stop.
“Aimee, I need to do something, and I’m not sure what may happen. Let’s sit on this stone wall for a moment, if you don’t mind.”
The skin above her left eye rose a little but she nodded, letting him set her down on the rock Max had created from nothing.
Sitting cross-legged, Max closed his eyes and took a deep breath.
Yes.
Pain like lightning came, and he fought to not flinch or quiver. Every fiber in his chest began to throb, and Max felt his heart racing.
Time moved differently, and a weird sensation inside him came to life.
[You have learned Sand Mastery - Rare]
Gasping for air, Max opened his eyes, seeing Aimee on her knees and watching him.
“Are you okay? You’re sweating a lot.”
Glancing at his chest and stomach, Max saw that he was covered in sweat. Not something he typically had to worry about, even in this heat.
“How long was I here?”
“Five minutes?”
Max nodded. He was glad he had waited.
[Skill Description - Sand Mastery]
*****
Sand Mastery - Rare Skill: The user has the ability to control sand. They may change its structure or keep its original form. Once modified beyond its original design, it may not be changed back. There is no limit to the size or shape of what one may design. As long as sand is available and the user has mana, they can construct walls and even buildings. Weapons may also be created and controlled.
*****
Reading the description a second time, Max wanted to test it out but couldn’t bring himself to. Doing so might tip off to Aimee his full power, and right now he preferred to keep that a secret.
Standing, Max cracked his neck and wiped off his chest with his hands.
“How much further?”
Scoffing, Aimee stood and shrugged.
“With how fast you run? Perhaps tonight. Usually, it takes two weeks or more for a group to reach Quan Ma. Even now, I’m surprised nothing has come to attack us.”
“I guess the gods like us,” he replied, holding up his arms and bending down some.
Laughing, Aimee jumped into his arms and pointed in the direction they needed to go.
***
Both suns were almost nothing more than yellow globes at both ends of the horizon, but Max already knew they were getting close.

Off in the distance he could see the tower, rising into the sky, not hidden by magic like it was on his world.
A sensation of excitement and also dread came over him as he considered what this might mean.
Could Fowl, Tanila, Batrire, and Cordellia be attempting the tower? I guess they wouldn't wait forever for me.
Buildings began to appear before long, and Max started to slow down some as Aimee squeezed his shoulder.
Large walls constructed of solid black glass shimmered from the light of the setting suns.
"Slow down! We need to talk!"
Max nodded, coming to a stop and letting her down.
"Listen," Aimee said as she stood between Max and the city, "I'm not sure what you're expecting to find here, but I need you to understand. I have never been here, and I only know what my mother told me. The city is dangerous… well, maybe not to you, but to me. Power is everything. The weak suffer, and the strong… they do horrible things."
She pulled out the pouch she had taken from Kaurma's corpse and opened it slightly.
"We have enough tokens for a decent room and some food, but finding one will require us to go into the city, and you… you need to hide that collar."
From inside her sleeve, Aimee produced one of the glass weapons she apparently had pocketed and began cutting at the fringe of her robe. Soon she had enough material torn off and motioned to Max to come closer.
He felt her wrapping it around his collar a few times, sliding it between his skin and the thing that took away his equipment.
I'm just glad that fool gave me a few items... Had I been sent naked out into the wilderness...
He shuddered, and Aimee paused and cocked her head.
"Did it hurt?"
"No. Sorry, I was just thinking about when it was first put on."
Clicking her tongue, she nodded and continued wrapping the cloth, finally tying it in a knot around his neck.
Stepping back she made some weird face but shrugged.
"It will work for now. Perhaps we can find some material and hide it better. Something strong, though, that won't be easily destroyed."
"Thank you," Max said, giving a slight bow. "I might have rushed in there like a fool, not thinking to hide this."
Snorting, Aimee nodded.
"Now listen, when you slept last night, my mother told me more about the city. We need to work our way through the different rings. It will take time, but I have no doubt you can manage it."
Max watched as she bent down and started drawing a small circle and then added multiple rings.
"There are seven sections within Quan Ma, and we need to advance through all of them. The first one," Aimee stated as she tapped the last ring with her new weapon, "is the easiest. After that, we can find a room and start looking for fights. It will take money and fame to push past that second ring. In time… perhaps the fourth or fifth ring will present to us someone who can take that collar off you."
Looking up at the suns that were fading, their golden light waning and the large moon now appearing overhead, Max knew time wasn't his ally.
"If that's our only choice, then I'll trust you to take the lead."
She nodded and frowned.
"We also need to get you a cloak. Some might not like seeing your smooth skin."
Chuckling, Max nodded and pointed toward the city.
"Can I still carry you, or do we need to walk the rest of the way?"
"Just a little bit more, but eventually I'll need to learn to walk again. You wouldn't want to get accustomed to carrying me everywhere I go. That would look bad."

PAT 12 286 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 286**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389489 2024-11-05;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1912533/chapter-286 2024-11-20;

“Who is this one who stands behind you? Why does he have a collar, and how do you expect to keep me from taking him?”

Max tried to not interfere. It was getting increasingly difficult as the crowd grew to about forty-plus lizard people.

Before Aimee stood a lizard woman who wore bands of leather wrapped around her body and tail. It was adorned with multiple shards of the sand glass, each one looking sharper than any object he had held yet.

“I have already told you, One Who Pierces Your Heart, this one is with me. I owe him and must lead him to Quan Ma.”

Chuckles came, and a few thrums reverberated from the crowd.

“The rumor is you were sold as a slave, and now you have returned, leading one of his kind, bound in a collar, and you expect me to let him just leave?! Do not think that I will hesitate to end your life, or worse yet, make you blind like your mother while I drag him behind me to Igarra!”

Max watched as the one he had finally figured out was called Kaurma pushed herself against Aimee, towering over her by a few inches, making her move back in the sand.

“Do not do that again,” Max said, letting the growl in his voice be heard by all. “Touch her once more, and I will strip the hide off you like I did the demon cats.”

Every head snapped in Max’s direction, and a murmur came, all in that same language he couldn’t understand, but Kaurma scoffed, moving to the side of Aimee and bared her teeth at Max.

“You dare talk to me like that?! I will strip your skin and make our healer heal you over and over until you beg me to let you call me master!”

Max sensed the crowd beginning to back up, felt the daggers that were set in leather sheaths vibrate slightly as the woman appeared to be smiling.

Or maybe she is smirking.

“Max, don’t—”

He didn’t wait.

Before anyone could react, Max summoned an ice prison, and the woman’s eyes started to bulge as it crept up her legs and tail.

Shards of glass came free from her outfit, all moving toward Max in an instant.

His wall of air came before him, causing them to bounce off, watching the sand controller struggle to understand why they had stopped for a moment.

Each second had the ice rising faster, and Max summoned an ice spear, placing it near the woman’s face.

Her daggers began to move around the sides of the walls, causing the other lizard men and woman nearby to leap out of the way, trying to not get cut by the flying shards.

Max summoned a wall of stone and ice on each side, smiling as they buried themselves inside his protective barrier.

“My weapon won’t miss, and your time is almost up. Drop your daggers and surrender, or I promise you, I won’t miss.”

She hissed, retracting them from the walls and sending her shards of glass at him, causing them to chip off pieces as they collided.

A shape appeared behind him, rising from the sand, a scimitar in its hand.

Max spun, one hand grabbing the weapon hand, the other his attacker by the throat.

Eyes bulged from the male lizard, his red and black pattern of scales accentuating his yellow skin.

“She’s not worth it. You don’t want to do this.”

Squeezing his hand, Max felt the wrist snap, and he tossed the warrior back, sending him about fifteen yards and into a wall of a house.

Two daggers came around the back, and Max sighed.

His ice spear moved forward, piercing the heart and chest of the woman he had imprisoned.

Both of his hands came up, catching the glass blades, which sliced his skin, almost shearing his fingers off as he held them in place, slowing down their attack.

[Regeneration]

Suddenly the power behind them stopped, and a cold blast of power came through him.

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Sand Mastery]?]

[Yes / No]

He wanted to click yes, but the thought of gaining a skill right now and not knowing how it might impact him made the choice to wait easy.

Gasps and groans came as the people around him backed away further.

“You killed her,” Aimee muttered. “She… she was so strong, and you… like she was a child.”

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“Thank you,” Max said, giving a slight bow. “I might have rushed in there like a fool, not thinking to hide this.”

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“We also need to get you a cloak. Some might not like seeing your smooth skin.”

Chuckling, Max nodded and pointed toward the city.

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13 Chapter 287

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1914387/chapter-287 2024-11-21 13:04;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Ever wondered why anime kingdoms summon high schoolers instead of professional soldiers? Well, this one got smart. Check out

Arcane Exfil by DrDoritosMD
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/98675/arcane-exfil

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/98675/arcane-exfil]

Chapter 287
“There is no sand here anymore,” Max stated as he studied the change in the land as they drew closer to Quan Ma. “And dirt… there is dirt and water.”
“Our people believe that Suljin herself came and stripped the sand from this place, crafting the city you shall soon be inside. She then carried the fertile soil you see here from far away and dug water wells and trenches that help everything to grow.”
Max was shocked at how quickly the temperature and environment was changing. Just like the rock cliffs seemed set in a line that stopped the sand, here was another area with a clear distinction between sand and dark brown soil.
Fruit trees were growing in well-defined orchards nearby, and Max watched as workers moved through the trees, picking fruit and carrying them to a cart.
Shouts came, and Max felt Aimee’s hand on his arm as she shook her head.
“Do not get involved, or we will never make it inside.”
His eyes found what she was talking about, different species tending the trees, yet there was a smaller bear-like being on the ground, a whip cracking against their flesh, held by a creature Max had never seen.
It was about ten feet tall, and even from a few hundred yards away, it wasn’t hard to make out the large protruding horn on its head.
“What is that?”
Scoffing, Aimee shook her head at him.
“You are the different one here. That is one of the many varieties of beastkin. They have thick, natural body armor, skin so thick that it can resist the sandstorms longer than many. While most of them are not bright, they are tasked with keeping others in check.”
She went silent and pushed Max down the black glass road they were walking on.
“We do not want to get involved. They become angry and will not stop until their temper is quenched or they have been knocked unconscious… Neither of which is easy to accomplish.”
Frowning, Max kept his eyes on the group, watching as the one with the whip seemed to ignore others' attempt at calming it down.
Carts moved slowly, pulled by people, and it took great effort to not openly stare at them.
The only perk Max had was that many did the same as he walked next to Aimee.
So many different races of animals walked as he had, and a twinge in his chest came at the thought that he had fought some of them in the tower before.
A dwarf and a goblin drove a mechanical cart that smoked, reminding Max of the tower floor he had fought their kind in.
“Stay here,” Aimee said as she jogged to a group standing near a few carts who were handing out food to workers on a break from some fields with a leafy plant running in rows.

Watching her talk with someone who was about his height, Max couldn't help but notice all of them staring at him.
"Move it, smooth skin!"
A cart that was coming by from behind him, headed toward the city, barely clipped him as a beastkin that looked like a nine-foot-tall gorilla snarled at him.
Two more of his kind sat behind him near the red fruits that filled the cart. Each had a club and sword on their hips, hands intentionally grabbing the handle.
What really caught Max's attention were two beastkin who looked like bulls, each with their horns cut off and chained to the cart.
Even though they weren't like him, the pain of seeing them treated like animals felt weird.
How many times have we used animals to pull carts and yet...
Lost in his thoughts, Max moved back, not flinching as the trio snorted and said something he couldn't understand, leaving him behind.
"Here," Aimee said as she ran up, Max already knowing she held a robe in her hands. "I paid more than I wanted, but you need this."
"How many…" He paused, trying to decide the right word to use. "How many people are there in slavery?"
"Put that on, and then we will talk."
Nodding, he slid it over his head. It was a little tight, his shoulders obviously wider than whatever had been wearing it and fell short, exposing his boots and shins underneath.
"Don't keep your head out. Pull the cover, and let's keep moving. All the field workers are returning for the night, and the road isn't safe… well, for you it probably is."
Pulling the hood over his head, Max moved beside her, watching as throngs of workers appeared on the fifty-yard-wide section of changed sand.
Some moved in packs, keeping away from other groups, which started tying ropes to the workers he knew were slaves.
A few had a black collar on their neck, and Max did his best to ignore the plight he witnessed more than a few dozen times as someone suffered physical injury.
"Over half," Aimee whispered.
"Half? Of what?"
"All the people who live here are slaves. Had you not rescued me…"
She paused and motioned to a section of lizard people off to one side, each wearing a black collar.
"I would be like them."
Glancing around, Max studied the people in line, and then it hit him.
"None of those who are slaves have any power, do they?"
Teeth appeared as Aimee shook her head, and Max had learned it was her frown.
"No… if you are weak… someone does not hesitate to take you."
Sighing, Max understood why Aimee had picked up her pace, moving a little faster as the line of workers moved, all staying to the edge of the road while wagons and carts filled with goods moved next to them.
Next were groups that had no collars, sticking together.
He and Aimee stood out as they walked alone.
"Do we need to join another group?"
She chuckled and shook her head.
"By walking like this we are telling them we're different. This says we don't need others to protect us and that we are strong enough to defend ourselves."
She tapped her neck once.
"If they saw your collar… chaos would erupt, and there would be a lot of fighting, and I have no doubt you would kill so many before guards came."
"Because I'm marked as a slave?"
Aimee shook her head.
"That collar is different. The color says you are worth much. It also tells people you have been *limited* from your true power, which if I can say is scary to believe."
Unable to help himself, Max chuckled, and her eyes widened slightly.

“Should I ask how much stronger you are?”
“Not strong enough to have prevented it from being put on in the first place,” he replied.
***
Guards lined a large black gate that was connected to a wall fifty feet high.
Max had already asked why a wall so tall was needed, and Aimee had responded that it was designed to keep people in as well as out. Some of the races could easily drop twenty or thirty feet without problems, but the added height made that much harder.
They had kept their heads down, shuffling in with the others and avoiding the problems those with carts filled with food suffered. Large braziers with fire burned brightly near the gate, casting light and letting the guards check everything that moved in.
It had surprised Max to see that at least a dozen different types of races were in the ranks of the guards, and the one that had surprised him the most had been the mantis one.
It stood eleven feet tall, with large, curved blades on its arm, and its eyes sparkled in the light, chattering as it inspected everything that came close.
Aimee had taken his arm, dragging him through the gates and into the city.
The first thing that stood out was the smell.
It was obvious this was the section of the city where cleanliness wasn’t important.
Large mounds of trash, rotting and smelling, filled a street they passed, and groups of children dug through the, refuse even at this time of night.
Fights were taking place, and people shouted, as they seemed to be betting on who would win.
Enclosed flames in metal boxes provided some light along the main road they were following, but Max could see and sense down the side streets how dangerous they must be.
Groups of thugs stood on corners, eyeing people, and Max and Aimee moved closer to some of the other groups, like a current, moving away from a stone.
“Over there is where the slaves go,” Aimee had said after they passed the first street that led to a wide section of long buildings all crafted from the same black glass.
Long lines trudged into the darkness of the streets, a feeling of oppression and despair coming from it.
Even with it being nighttime, the two-plus hours it took to reach the next gate was never a dull moment.
Vendors called out their wares, offering food for those who had just returned from the fields.
Aimee had shaken her head no and informed Max that her mother had told her those choices were smaller, more expensive, and not always the safest, taking advantage of those who were starving after working all day.
At the second gate, Max saw that the guards here were much more involved and better organized.
Their weapons looked well maintained, and even their leather armor had the appearance of being cleaned regularly.
Four groups stood at the gate, each inspecting or talking to everyone who entered, ensuring that no one got inside without at least talking with a guard.
That led to their first problem.
“I’m not going to say this again, lower your hood.”
Max didn’t move, letting Aimee handle the situation as she told him to.
He could see her chest was out, not backing down from the pair of guards who towered over her by a few feet.
“You do realize my master would prefer to not draw attention and that doing so would not be good for any of us,” she replied. “Perhaps when we finally gain an audience with Igarra, we could explain how many or how few problems we experienced.”
Max could sense the two guards shifting at the mention of the ruler of this city.

Another presence came, and Max wondered for a moment if every gate had their own praying mantis.
Chittering noise came as it spoke, and then Max sensed as it bent toward him.
“Do you dare not lift your hood, and shall you allow this one to risk punishment for you both at the mention of the First of her Claw’s name?”
Sighing, Max knew the moment was coming, and he reached up for his hood, his hand appearing as he did.
“Wait!”
The hiss came from the mantis, who started clattering and chittering something.
One of these days I’m going to figure out how to understand all of these creatures...
“Forgive us,” the guard who was a tiger said as Max felt them bend slightly. “You may enter.”
Snorting, Aimee played her role, motioning ahead for Max to come.
“Thank you for realizing the mistake you were about to make!”
Following Aimee, Max felt so many people were looking at them, and as they left couldn’t understand the discussion that sent one of the guards running to a building outside the gate.
As they walked under the walls, Max moved closer to his companion.
“What changed?”
“Your hand,” she whispered. “The moment their commander saw your hand, he knew you were not like us.”
“And is there no ring that will allow me to understand all that is said and not just in the one or two languages you all speak?”
Snorting, Aimee shook her head.
“There are… those rings are not cheap, and we are far from them for now. I keep forgetting that you can only understand the two languages. While I can speak four, I can at least understand about fourteen or fifteen more.”
“Nineteen languages,” Max muttered as they moved into the second ring of the city.
“How many are there?”
“Over fifty,” she replied, gently grabbing his arm with her hand. “Now follow me. I have somewhere to find.”

PAT 13 287 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 287**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389494 2024-11-06;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1914387/chapter-287 2024-11-20;

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“Our people believe that Suljin herself came and stripped the sand from this place, crafting the city you shall soon be inside. She then carried the fertile soil you see here from far away and dug water wells and trenches that help everything to grow.”

Max was shocked at how quickly the temperature and environment was changing.

Just like the rock cliffs seemed set in a line that stopped the sand, here was another area with a clear distinction between sand and dark brown soil.

Fruit trees were growing in well-defined orchards nearby, and Max watched as workers moved through the trees, picking fruit and carrying them to a cart.

Shouts came, and Max felt Aimee’s hand on his arm as she shook her head.

“Do not get involved, or we will never make it inside.”

His eyes found what she was talking about, different species tending the trees, yet there was a smaller bear-like being on the ground, a whip cracking against their flesh, held by a creature Max had never seen.

It was about ten feet tall, and even from a few hundred yards away, it wasn’t hard to make out the large protruding horn on its head.

“What is that?”

Scoffing, Aimee shook her head at him.

“You are the different one here. That is one of the many varieties of beastkin. They have thick, natural body armor, skin so thick that it can resist the sandstorms longer than many. While most of them are not bright, they are tasked with keeping others in check.”

She went silent and pushed Max down the black glass road they were walking on.

“We do not want to get involved. They become angry and will not stop until their temper is quenched or they have been knocked unconscious… Neither of which is easy to accomplish.”

Frowning, Max kept his eyes on the group, watching as the one with the whip seemed to ignore others' attempt at calming it down.

Carts moved slowly, pulled by people, and it took great effort to not openly stare at them.

The only perk Max had was that many did the same as he walked next to Aimee.

So many different races of animals walked as he had, and a twinge in his chest came at the thought that he had fought some of them in the tower before.

A dwarf and a goblin drove a mechanical cart that smoked, reminding Max of the tower floor he had fought their kind in.

“Stay here,” Aimee said as she jogged to a group standing near a few carts who were handing out food to workers on a break from some fields with a leafy plant running in rows.

Watching her talk with someone who was about his height, Max couldn’t help but notice all of them staring at him.

“Move it, smooth skin!”

A cart that was coming by from behind him, headed toward the city, barely clipped him as a beastkin that looked like a nine-foot-tall gorilla snarled at him.

Two more of his kind sat behind him near the red fruits that filled the cart. Each had a club and sword on their hips, hands intentionally grabbing the handle.

What really caught Max’s attention were two beastkin who looked like bulls, each with their horns cut off and chained to the cart.

Even though they weren’t like him, the pain of seeing them treated like animals felt weird.

How many times have we used animals to pull carts and yet…

Lost in his thoughts, Max moved back, not flinching as the trio snorted and said something he couldn't understand, leaving him behind.

"Here," Aimee said as she ran up, Max already knowing she held a robe in her hands. "I paid more than I wanted, but you need this."

"How many…" He paused, trying to decide the right word to use. "How many people are there in slavery?"

"Put that on, and then we will talk."

Nodding, he slid it over his head. It was a little tight, his shoulders obviously wider than whatever had been wearing it and fell short, exposing his boots and shins underneath.

"Don't keep your head out. Pull the cover, and let's keep moving. All the field workers are returning for the night, and the road isn't safe… well, for you it probably is."

Pulling the hood over his head, Max moved beside her, watching as throngs of workers appeared on the fifty-yard-wide section of changed sand.

Some moved in packs, keeping away from other groups, which started tying ropes to the workers he knew were slaves.

A few had a black collar on their neck, and Max did his best to ignore the plight he witnessed more than a few dozen times as someone suffered physical injury.

"Over half," Aimee whispered.

"Half? Of what?"

"All the people who live here are slaves. Had you not rescued me…"

She paused and motioned to a section of lizard people off to one side, each wearing a black collar.

"I would be like them."

Glancing around, Max studied the people in line, and then it hit him.

"None of those who are slaves have any power, do they?"

Teeth appeared as Aimee shook her head, and Max had learned it was her frown.

“No… if you are weak… someone does not hesitate to take you.”

Sighing, Max understood why Aimee had picked up her pace, moving a little faster as the line of workers moved, all staying to the edge of the road while wagons and carts filled with goods moved next to them.

Next were groups that had no collars, sticking together.

He and Aimee stood out as they walked alone.

“Do we need to join another group?”

She chuckled and shook her head.

“By walking like this we are telling them we’re different. This says we don’t need others to protect us and that we are strong enough to defend ourselves.”

She tapped her neck once.

“If they saw your collar… chaos would erupt, and there would be a lot of fighting, and I have no doubt you would kill so many before guards came.”

“Because I’m marked as a slave?”

Aimee shook her head.

“That collar is different. The color says you are worth much. It also tells people you have been *limited* from your true power, which if I can say is scary to believe.”

Unable to help himself, Max chuckled, and her eyes widened slightly.

“Should I ask how much stronger you are?”

“Not strong enough to have prevented it from being put on in the first place,” he replied.

***

Guards lined a large black gate that was connected to a wall fifty feet high.

Max had already asked why a wall so tall was needed, and Aimee had responded that it was designed to keep people in as well as out. Some of the races could easily drop twenty or thirty feet without problems, but the added height made that much harder.

They had kept their heads down, shuffling in with the others and avoiding the problems those with carts filled with food suffered. Large braziers with fire burned brightly near the gate, casting light and letting the guards check everything that moved in.

It had surprised Max to see that at least a dozen different types of races were in the ranks of the guards, and the one that had surprised him the most had been the mantis one.

It stood eleven feet tall, with large, curved blades on its arm, and its eyes sparkled in the light, chattering as it inspected everything that came close.

Aimee had taken his arm, dragging him through the gates and into the city.

The first thing that stood out was the smell.

It was obvious this was the section of the city where cleanliness wasn’t important.

Large mounds of trash, rotting and smelling, filled a street they passed, and groups of children dug through the, refuse even at this time of night.

Fights were taking place, and people shouted, as they seemed to be betting on who would win.

Enclosed flames in metal boxes provided some light along the main road they were following, but Max could see and sense down the side streets how dangerous they must be.

Groups of thugs stood on corners, eyeing people, and Max and Aimee moved closer to some of the other groups, like a current, moving away from a stone.

“Over there is where the slaves go,” Aimee had said after they passed the first street that led to a wide section of long buildings all crafted from the same black glass. Long lines trudged into the darkness of the streets, a feeling of oppression and despair coming from it.

Even with it being nighttime, the two-plus hours it took to reach the next gate was never a dull moment.

Vendors called out their wares, offering food for those who had just returned from the fields.

Aimee had shaken her head no and informed Max that her mother had told her those choices were smaller, more expensive, and not always the safest, taking advantage of those who were starving after working all day.

At the second gate, Max saw that the guards here were much more involved and better organized.

Their weapons looked well maintained, and even their leather armor had the appearance of being cleaned regularly.

Four groups stood at the gate, each inspecting or talking to everyone who entered, ensuring that no one got inside without at least talking with a guard.

That led to their first problem.

“I’m not going to say this again, lower your hood.”

Max didn’t move, letting Aimee handle the situation as she told him to.

He could see her chest was out, not backing down from the pair of guards who towered over her by a few feet.

“You do realize my master would prefer to not draw attention and that doing so would not be good for any of us,” she replied. “Perhaps when we finally gain an audience with Igarra, we could explain how many or how few problems we experienced.”

Max could sense the two guards shifting at the mention of the ruler of this city.

Another presence came, and Max wondered for a moment if every gate had their own praying mantis.

Chittering noise came as it spoke, and then Max sensed as it bent toward him.

“Do you dare not lift your hood, and shall you allow this one to risk punishment for you both at the mention of the First of her Claw’s name?”

Sighing, Max knew the moment was coming, and he reached up for his hood, his hand appearing as he did.

“Wait!”

The hiss came from the mantis, who started clattering and chittering something.

One of these days I’m going to figure out how to understand all of these creatures…

“Forgive us,” the guard who was a tiger said as Max felt them bend slightly. “You may enter.”

Snorting, Aimee played her role, motioning ahead for Max to come.

“Thank you for realizing the mistake you were about to make!”

Following Aimee, Max felt so many people were looking at them, and as they left couldn’t understand the discussion that sent one of the guards running to a building outside the gate.

As they walked under the walls, Max moved closer to his companion.

“What changed?”

“Your hand,” she whispered. “The moment their commander saw your hand, he knew you were not like us.”

“And is there no ring that will allow me to understand all that is said and not just in the one or two languages you all speak?”

Snorting, Aimee shook her head.

“There are… those rings are not cheap, and we are far from them for now. I keep forgetting that you can only understand the two languages. While I can speak four, I can at least understand about fourteen or fifteen more.”

“Nineteen languages,” Max muttered as they moved into the second ring of the city. “How many are there?”

“Over fifty,” she replied, gently grabbing his arm with her hand. “Now follow me. I have somewhere to find.”

14 Chapter 288

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1916102/chapter-288 2025-01-16;

Chapter 288
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The smell of spices and food came from inside, and Max felt his stomach growl because he realized it had been a while since he had eaten anything that smelled this nice in ages.
Moving beside Aimee, he saw the door that swung open wasn’t glass like so many but instead was metal.
“We’re here. My mother told me about this place, so we should be fine.”
Inside they found much noise and the scent of something natural and clean. Max raised his head a little higher, studying the room.
Glass benches and tables lined the area, laid out in three rows of three, while a few small tables and chairs sat along one section furthest away.
A long section of lightly colored glass ran along the right, drinks sitting upon the top, and patrons were resting on blocks of glass.
Even as they entered, the laughter and conversations didn’t stop, but he sensed the looks they received upon coming inside.
“Welcome to my shelter!”
A cheerful voice called out, and Max turned to see a lizard man coming toward them.
“I am…” Max fought the translation device that wanted to give him the meaning, instead hearing the name this time. “Gaomno! This is the Scaled Den and a safe place for all those who worship Suljin!”
Aimee bowed, and Max bent his head slightly.
“My companion and I are in need of a room and something to eat. Forgive him if he does not remove his hood out here in the center of the room. I am called Aimee and was told by a friend that this was the best place for me to stay and that the water is always pure here.”
Max could feel the man studying him, but nothing else was asked as his Sonar revealed the grin that appeared and the way his neck seemed to expand.
“Then you are most welcome if you have been told to come. Please take one of the tables, and I shall get you a room and some food!”
Aimee took Max and once again led him like some old, blind man to the corner of the room where an empty table and chairs were.
She nodded at those they weaved around, and Max could understand only a few fragments of conversation that took place inside the room.

Sitting down on the chair, he ignored how firm it was, glad to be able to see the entrance of the room.
“Did you give the man a signal?”
Aimee tapped his wrist.
“What do you mean?”
“ *The water is always pure here* . That seems very specific unless all the other places in town don’t have water like that.”
“You don’t miss anything, do you Max?” Aimee asked as she tapped her nails against the glass tabletop. “It was. It lets him know that I was sent by someone who was here a long time ago. That is why we were given this seat versus made to sit in the middle of the room.”
“And this is your first time here?”
“It is,” Aimee replied.
“Yet you act like none of this is strange. You stood up to those guards without backing down, and even now look like you belong here. How?”
“All my life I have been trained to be strong. Even if I am weak, I know how one should act,” Aimee stated as she moved closer to him. “Had I not stood my ground, they would have pushed harder. If I had not walked with you by myself to this city, I’m not certain I could have been ready for that moment. Every second my heart felt like it would burst, but if I hope to free you and gain the power I desire so badly, I must become what I wish to be.”
She lowered her voice and leaned closer.
“Never forget. This land requires you to be hard. Everyone here will be hard, and if you are soft, Max, they will challenge you every moment.”
It would appear your mantra is not limited to just my world. Are you there?
No reply came, and Max wondered what his skill was still doing. If it had not found a solution to his collar, then he wouldn’t have any choice but to find one on his own.
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Both of them leaned back in their chairs, and Max wanted to lick his fingers as Aimee had hers, but he resisted the urge.
Vegetables seasoned in spices had tickled his tongue. Flatbread that had the perfect texture held the vegetables perfectly, while small strips of some meat he didn’t ask about had rounded off the tiny rolls they had created.
Each of them felt full, and Max had given his compliments twice already to Gaomno for the food.
“If you are ready, the room is now clean and set up for you.”
Both of them rose and followed Gaomno through a glass hallway and then to some stairs that spiraled upward. Tiny stones glowed with a soft blue light, each one set inside the wall every foot apart. It created a glow that reminded Max of the dungeons and the moss he had been in so many times.
What kind of power and skill must a person have to create something like this? How much sand and mana did it take?
Moving down a hallway at the top of the stairs, they were led to a metal door, and Max sensed their host give Aimee a key.
“I shall have food ready when you two come down in the morning. If you need anything, do not hesitate to touch the panel and let me know.”
Max watched as the man left and heard the sound of the key unlocking the door. Stepping inside behind Aimee, he sensed the room before a light turned on.
Aimee had touched a glass with runes near the door, and six small stones illuminated in the glass room. Outside in the hall, the glass had been darker, but inside their room it was almost clear, causing the light to reflect and brighten up everything.
A single bed was against the wall with blankets, and what had to be fresh grass of some kind was stuffed inside a pad.
Other than a table and what Max guessed was a piss pot, the room was empty.
Closing the door behind him, he took the key and locked the door on the inside.

Behind him, he sensed Aimee moving to the bed, having removed the robe she had worn this whole time, and his mind tried to ignore the curves he felt appear from beneath the robes.
“It would appear we must share this bed.”
Her voice seemed excited, and Max took a few breaths.
Letting them out, he shook his head.
“Aimee… I… I have a woman I love on my world. I do not think—”
She laughed, and Max wanted to turn but didn’t until she had moved on the bed and pulled the cover over herself.
“Foolish man. You haven’t earned that right, and while I have no doubt you could, do not assume this is anything more than not having to sleep on the hard floor. Trust me, it is not pleasant.”
Max considered that thought and then frowned.
“Is there water to bathe in? To wash with?”
“I am not that rich, and I doubt Gaomno has enough water for such a thing.”
He could smell himself as he stood there, and Max admitted that for seven days he hadn’t taken his pants off except to use the restroom a few times. Even now it had been three days since then, and he could feel the filth.
Moving to where the glass container was on the floor, Max summoned a fireball and put it above the opening. It was clean and smelled fresh, so he summoned small shards of ice, letting them melt from the fire and drip inside the container.
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Nodding, Max pulled off his robe and removed his boots.
Setting them on the ground next to him, he winced at the smell that came from inside.
I guess magical scent removal is too much to ask.
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“You’re awake,” Aimee muttered, slowly rolling over. “Thank you for keeping me warm. Get dressed, and then we can start looking for a place to earn tokens.”
Max nodded and slid off the bed, picking up his boots that were on the floor and moving to where his robe was hanging.
It was mainly dry, so he channeled some heat into his hands and held it near the fabric, grateful some of the smell was gone.
Aimee got dressed and moved next to him.
“You are a strange race, Max. For someone with so much power, you act like a child, afraid to be touched.”
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With the suns both shining, Max was glad they had made these buildings black glass. Even then, there was a shimmer to them, requiring a moment for his eyes to adjust upon walking outside.
The city was bustling with carts passing by and the occasional group of people moving together, carrying something on their shoulders.
Aimee motioned to the left.
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A NOTE FROM AUTHOR_NAME

Tttt

PAT 14 288 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 288**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389497 2024-11-07;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1916102/chapter-288 2024-11-22;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1916102/chapter-288 2024-11-26;

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15 Chapter 289

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1917982/chapter-289 2025-01-16;

Chapter 289
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“Because their debts are gone?”
Chuckling, Aimee nodded and motioned for him to join her as they crossed the street.

“I know a few who probably rejoiced the moment we left town, and many most likely raced to her home, wanting to search it for valuables and tokens.”
“The strong take…” Max muttered.
“Yes! You are finally understanding! Now, come, it is time to meet with the master of this place.”
Two extremely large guards stood on the other side of the doors, and Max looked up at the pair, seeing the horn set on their noses and the thick skin that covered their body.
“Why are you here?” the one on the left asked, his voice not hiding his displeasure of their presence.
“My master has come to seek a place in the fights. He wants to test himself against whatever you might throw at him.”
Both guards started to laugh, their deep voices carrying across the room, and the one closest to Max reached for his hood.
“This tiny one? Who does he—”
Max slapped the guard’s hand away as it got close to his hood, hitting it so hard that a hiss of pain came from the one he struck.
“Why I’ll–”
“Let it go!”
Max heard the sound but knew there was no one else in the small entry room but the four of them.
A growl came from the one he had struck, but the other didn’t hesitate to act.
“You two. Go to the next door.”
“But he hit me!” bellowed the guard who was reaching for the club on his hip.
“The last person who pulled a weapon on him died a horrible death,” Aimee said, not flinching under the gaze of both guards. “I doubt your master would like this room to be covered with blood.”
“Let it go, or I shall put you in the cages myself!”
The voice came again, booming through the small room, and both guards didn’t hesitate to step aside, leaving a small path between them and through the empty glass room and toward the wooden doors beyond.
Without waiting, Max and Aimee moved, reaching the doors and watching as they opened up, each one held by a small servant with wings. Max studied them, seeing the multifaceted eyes, and wondered if they were like a moth of some kind.
This room was furnished with chairs and a few couches, cushions set on each of them. Weapons lined the wall, and at the end was a creature, which made Max wonder what kind of bug, insect, or monster it was.
A dark blue and purple carapace covered its body, and its hands were nothing more than hooked appendages. A mouthful of teeth extruded from both the top and bottom portion of its mouth, and somewhere two eyes were sunken in the protective layers of carapace.
It sat in a chair that was ornate, crafted of wood and decorated with carvings.
Even as it sat, Max could tell it was at least nine feet tall.
One of the moth attendants led them toward the one in charge, stopping about eight feet from him.
“Welcome… word travels fast about a pair like you, and seeing what you did to my guard has earned you the right to stand before me. I am Kauakan. Tell me, why do you want to fight?”
Aimee took a step forward and bent at her hip, bending slightly.
“Tokens and fame. One day, my master wishes to stand before Igarra herself and make her acquaintance.”
“Is it more for tokens or more for fame?” Kauakan asked as he picked at his teeth with his hooked claw.
“One needs tokens to progress in Quan Ma, and one also needs renown to be allowed deeper still. So it is both.”
A grunt came as Kauakan rose from his chair, towering over Max and her.
“What is in it for me?”

“You get to choose the fights,” Aimee replied. “He shall fight whatever you put before him. We shall take forty percent of all winnings.”
The room shook with a laughter that reminded Max of when a demon had laughed before him.
“Forty percent?! You expect me to give you forty percent?! ON what? A hooded figure? Bold claims? I won’t give you more than five percent!”
Max watched as Aimee motioned toward the door.
“Let’s go, master. This one is obviously not as smart as we were told. We shall check the other sides of the wall.”
She turned and started walking across the room, and Max moved to follow her, keeping his head down and not saying a word.
She stopped a few feet before the closed doors where the attendant was standing, looking at Kauakan and waiting for what appeared permission to open the door.
“Fine, fifteen percent!”
The insect’s voice boomed at their backs, and Max paused as Aimee turned.
Her teeth showed as she shook her head.
“He would be willing to accept thirty percent, but we both know you stand to make quite a large amount of money, especially the more people he kills. Besides, eventually he will defeat the champions for your foes, and that alone is worth more than tokens.”
“Twenty percent, and no more!”
Max watched as Aimee looked at him and shook her head.
“He says twenty-five percent, or we’ll offer your competitors his service.”
A grunt came and turned into a growl.
Able to sense the movements of Kauakan, Max whirled around as the insect drew closer, causing him to pause his approach.
“I shall offer twenty percent for now. If he defeats the first two opponents, I shall give twenty-five percent.”
Raising one of his curved blades, Kauakan pointed at Max.
“If he defeats a champion, I will grant him half of whatever I make.”
“Done!” Aimee said, a little louder and faster than Max might have preferred, but it was obvious she was excited at the offer.
Grunting, clacking noises came, and Max sensed one of the moth attendants running off toward a door on the side of the room.
“I shall have the paperwork here in a moment, and a badge shall be given. Tell me, when do you two desire to fight.”
“How soon is the next one?”
“Tomorrow,” Kauakan replied with a grunt. “How shall I promote him, and what name shall I use for his moniker?”
Max already knew the name he wanted, and when Aimee paused, not answering the question, he finally spoke.
“Call me Ifrit.”
A cough came from Kauakan at that name, and he glanced at Aimee, who nodded.
“So you are fire based?”
Not moving at all, Max summoned a fireball and had it hover near him.
“That isn’t very impressive.”
“Would you like me to burn everything in here not made of glass?”
Kauakan snorted and shook his head.
“I would prefer you don’t. Very well, I shall start promoting you today. Be here four hours before the suns set. We shall travel to the arena and see just how strong you really are.”
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Once they were on the road and a few streets away, Aimee let out a trill and shook Max’s arm.
“We did it! Twenty percent and more as you win!”
“You handled yourself well,” Max replied. “I’m almost certain Kauakan was scared of you more than he was me.”

He could sense the wave of excitement and joy coming off of Aimee as she almost skipped in the streets.
“Now then, I need a weapon. Where can we go to find one?”
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“I’m not certain, but let me ask someone. There should be a trade area nearby.”
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Max shrugged and began moving up the stairs to the glass door, pushing it in as he studied the writing etched on the outside.
It had been painted with some orange color and looked to have been done in haste. He couldn’t read it, but Aimee had pointed out it said *weapon maker* .
As soon as he stepped inside, the sounds and smells brought him back to all those hours spent working in the Faction house.
Hunched over a table was a kemonomimi who had large chunks of orange fur missing from his arms. His hands were holding tools that painstakingly tapped the etching on an axe head.
Minutes passed before the weapon maker looked up and saw them, exclaiming at their appearance, setting down his tools, and moving to the counter that separated the area they stood in from his working section.
“Forgive me! I was working on an order and did not hear you come in! Tell me, how can I help you?”
“My master requires a weapon but something simple. A staff made of stonewood.”
Cocking his head to the side, the cat studied Max and chuckled.
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“What is your name?”
Startled by Max’s question, the man crossed his arms and stood tall.
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PAT 15 289 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 289**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389498 2024-11-08;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1917982/chapter-289 2024-11-26;

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16 Chapter 290

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1923180/chapter-290 2025-01-16;

Chapter 290
“You want to use my shop to make your own weapon? Why would I give you access to such a thing?”
“First, I would pay to make my own weapon. The materials as well as a fee to use your tools and shop. Second, I would like to learn how you craft weapons and how that is done here.”
Grinning, Max drummed his fingers on the glass counter.
“Last, if I am able to, I will teach you secrets that I know about crafting weapons.”
Romandis leaned against the counter, drawing closer to Max. His yellow eyes were locked on the smooth skin that stood in his shop.
“Tell me, am I going to suffer problems from allowing you in my shop? Your kind is known for causing chaos wherever you go.”
“I promise you,” Max said as he held out his hand, “I will do my best to ensure no harm comes to you or your shop. In fact I would hope that me being here might help you acquire a new door.”
Both bushy eyebrows raised, and the weapon crafter glanced at the glass door behind Max and Aimee.
“I would enjoy a new door,” he muttered. “Very well. Let us see what you can do. Grab an apron and come around.”
Romandis moved to one end of the counter and pointed at a pile of leather on a glass chair.
Without waiting, Max moved, pulling his robe off.
“No shirt? Are you not… no never mind. Tell me, what kind of weapons can you make?”
“I have made many different ones from swords, to hammers, staffs, tools, and even a bow.”
“A bow? Such a thing is worthless here. One cannot find the feathers required to make fletching for arrows,” Romandis replied. “Stories of bow users are almost laughed upon. Everything here revolves around a few basic things.”
Leading Max through the shop, he pointed at the forge, which had a small set of coals barely lit.
“Fire is expensive, and coal even more so. I only smelt when it is needed. Metal is… costly. There are many different metals out there, but all the ore comes at great cost, as only those who are Stone Masters are able to harvest and find them. It creates a system where they set the price and distribute it as desired.
“From there, the last part of most weapons is the possibility of imbuing power within the weapon. Those who can do that are known as Enchanters, and only four of renown are in the city. Those who claim to be one are often charlatans, taking money and providing nothing in return. It is known that enchanting can fail and is not guaranteed, but these four have earned the reputation of not failing more than they succeed, so many are willing to entrust them the rare stones they acquire for such a thing.”

Romandis pointed at the axe head he had been working on.
“I was commissioned for something that would be able to take such an enchantment. They provided the material, and all I provide is the work. Not much can be made that way, but it does help me keep my shop running.”
Max nodded as the man continued to talk, pointing out different tables and sections. Everything was similar in some ways, yet there were a few nuances.
“This here is a carving knife,” Romandis stated as he handed the worn tool to Max. “You must imbue it with your power as you use it to shave the wood from a stonewood branch. It takes most weapon smiths weeks to shape a single staff. The demand and drain is very intense.”
Holding the tool, Max inspected it, seeing that the blade was made of glass, yet it was clear. The handle itself was wrapped in leather, but he was certain the handle was made from the stonewood.
Closing his eyes, Max focused on the blade, trying to reach out and sense how to connect with it. He tried channeling fire, but that did nothing, and even when he used cold or lightning, they, too, seemed to reflect back from the tool.
Laughter came from Romandis, and Max opened his eyes to see the smith staring at him.
“You use magic?”
Nodding, Max saw a few worn teeth appear as the kemonomimi smiled.
“This isn’t a tool that uses magic. It uses your life.”
Tapping his chest twice, Romandis held out his hand and waited for Max to give him the tool.
After holding it, for a moment, a grunt came, and Max watched as the blade changed color, turning blue for a few seconds before losing its glow.
Romandis took a deep breath and sighed.
“Forging weapons here requires one to give their own life. Growing stronger allows you to do more. The problem comes with having to recover.”
Tapping the blade against a glass table, Romandis frowned.
“Many smiths have burned themselves out by not recovering between jobs, and ended up losing a journey that is not meant to be done in a day.”
He gave the tool back to Max and smiled.
“Try to see if you can get it to work. If you can, then you will be able to use the other tools in here. For now, let me go search through my stonewood stores. How big are you wanting this staff?”
Max grinned and held his hand about a foot above his head.
“Just a little taller than me.”
“So not very long,” Romandis joked as he turned and moved toward a doorway at the end of the wall.
As he left, Max sensed Aimee moving toward him.
“Are you certain this is wise? We could buy you a staff!”
Shaking his head, Max grinned at her.
“No. I need to make my own for now,” Max replied with a sigh. “Let’s say I take a weapon from someone else, and it fails during a fight. I could blame them, but even worse, I might die. This way, I’ll know the limits of the weapon and what it can and can’t do.”
Max leaned closer as he spun the tool in his hand.
“Besides, you don’t want to miss out if I’m able to do more.”
Her scales shifted on the ridge of her snout.
“Do you have any other secrets you want to share with me?”
Shaking his head, he grinned.
“Nope. Just that I enjoy baking and making weapons.”
***
Max sat on the glass chair, holding a piece of stonewood in his hand and the clear knife in the other. He slowly moved it across the wood, listening to Romandis as the smith spoke in a slow and quiet tone.

“Breathe. Think about the tool as an extension of you. It obeys your desires and requires your life to work. Slide it along the wood. Imagine it taking off just a few slivers.”
Max felt the blade catch and jump as it moved down the two-foot section he held. He could feel the tool in his hand, knew what he wanted, but there was some disconnect between it and him.
Over and over he scraped, listening to the sound, wanting it to change.
“Slow… breathe slower. Feel the tool. It is part of your hand.”
Romandis paused for a moment as Max continued to scrape the glass against the wood.
“Remember what you said about when you crafted a weapon. You felt like it was a part of you. The way it infused you and you felt connected with each strike of the hammer. This is the same. It is a part of you.”
Those images played over and over in his head. Max knew he was smiling, thinking about each weapon he had crafted. The hammer he had made for the young boy, Brian. Those green eyes and red hair and the smile he had when Max handed that tool to him.
A tug came inside his chest.
Like a thread somehow appearing, Max searched for it, not trying to grab and tear it, knowing from casting and crafting how delicate this could sometimes be.
Somehow Romandis seemed to notice the change.
“Yes… feel that connection. Let it grow…”
Max took another breath in slowly, holding it, filling his lungs, and the sensation of that thread seemed to become stronger. It crept along his chest, moving toward his shoulder and down his arm.
Right before it reached his hand, Max started to breathe faster, and his heart started to race. As he did the thread began to retract, moving back toward his chest.
“Slow down! Breathe slow. Relax! Do not force it!”
The smith’s words made him pause, slowing down his breath again and controlling his excited heart. It took about fifteen seconds to stop the retreating thread completely, and finally it began to once more move toward his hand.
As it reached his wrist, Max forced himself to stay calm and remembered that connection to everything he had ever made.
Two more breaths, and the thread entered his hand, wrapping around the hilt. It felt like someone had just kicked him in the chest.
Immediately, the thread expanded, and power flowed from him into the tool.
[Weapon Crafting Has Evolved]
[New Knowledge Gained]
[New Weapon Blueprints Acquired]
Pain came as his mind felt the flooding of information enter his head.
It took a moment to stop seeing stars, even with his eyes closed and the sound of Romandis finally reached him.
“Stop! Stop cutting!”
Max opened his eyes, looking down at the piece of wood he had been holding, dragging the blade across.
The knife glowed like a torch, casting a blue glow much brighter than what it had looked like when Romandis had held it and demonstrated.
Four sections of wood had fallen to the floor, and the blade was almost to where his fingers were, holding the wood.
“Who are you?” the smith asked, his shock not hidden by his tone. “How… how can you have this much power?”
Having not answered, Max stared at the tool, holding it upward and felt his life flowing into it. The pain was gone, and he knew there was so much more he could give, yet Max decided to check just in case.
[Simple Health Check]
*****
HP: 16,583/16,700

*****
Max was amazed at how fast he was burning his hit points, yet he knew if he needed to, using regeneration would bring them all back.
I could technically keep this going forever with regeneration...
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“So, can I make my own weapon now?”
Grunting, a toothy grin came over the smith’s face as he nodded.
“If you’re not careful, I’ll make you do all my work. With the power you have you could finish a month’s worth of orders in a few days!”
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Each section was sharp, almost like a spear tip.
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“Please don’t break that!”
Max winced as he saw the table had a slight crack in it now.
“I guess I’ll owe you a new one. Sorry about that.”
Turning to look at Aimee, he saw her staring at him, her jaw unhinged.
“Every day you amaze me, Max,” she muttered.

PAT 16 290 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 290**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389639 2024-11-12;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1923180/chapter-290 2024-11-26;

“You want to use my shop to make your own weapon? Why would I give you access to such a thing?”
“First, I would pay to make my own weapon. The materials as well as a fee to use your tools and shop. Second, I would like to learn how you craft weapons and how that is done here.”
Grinning, Max drummed his fingers on the glass counter.
“Last, if I am able to, I will teach you secrets that I know about crafting weapons.”

Romandis leaned against the counter, drawing closer to Max. His yellow eyes were locked on the smooth skin that stood in his shop.
“Tell me, am I going to suffer problems from allowing you in my shop? Your kind is known for causing chaos wherever you go.”
“I promise you,” Max said as he held out his hand, “I will do my best to ensure no harm comes to you or your shop. In fact I would hope that me being here might help you acquire a new door.”
Both bushy eyebrows raised, and the weapon crafter glanced at the glass door behind Max and Aimee.
“I would enjoy a new door,” he muttered. “Very well. Let us see what you can do. Grab an apron and come around.”
Romandis moved to one end of the counter and pointed at a pile of leather on a glass chair.
Without waiting, Max moved, pulling his robe off.
“No shirt? Are you not… no never mind. Tell me, what kind of weapons can you make?”
“I have made many different ones from swords, to hammers, staffs, tools, and even a bow.”
“A bow? Such a thing is worthless here. One cannot find the feathers required to make fletching for arrows,” Romandis replied. “Stories of bow users are almost laughed upon. Everything here revolves around a few basic things.”
Leading Max through the shop, he pointed at the forge, which had a small set of coals barely lit.
“Fire is expensive, and coal even more so. I only smelt when it is needed. Metal is… costly. There are many different metals out there, but all the ore comes at great cost, as only those who are Stone Masters are able to harvest and find them. It creates a system where they set the price and distribute it as desired.
“From there, the last part of most weapons is the possibility of imbuing power within the weapon. Those who can do that are known as Enchanters, and only four of renown are in the city. Those who claim to be one are often charlatans, taking money and providing nothing in return. It is known that enchanting can fail and is not guaranteed, but these four have earned the reputation of not failing more than they succeed, so many are willing to entrust them the rare stones they acquire for such a thing.”
Romandis pointed at the axe head he had been working on.
“I was commissioned for something that would be able to take such an enchantment. They provided the material, and all I provide is the work. Not much can be made that way, but it does help me keep my shop running.”
Max nodded as the man continued to talk, pointing out different tables and sections.

Everything was similar in some ways, yet there were a few nuances.
“This here is a carving knife,” Romandis stated as he handed the worn tool to Max. “You must imbue it with your power as you use it to shave the wood from a stonewood branch. It takes most weapon smiths weeks to shape a single staff. The demand and drain is very intense.”
Holding the tool, Max inspected it, seeing that the blade was made of glass, yet it was clear. The handle itself was wrapped in leather, but he was certain the handle was made from the stonewood.
Closing his eyes, Max focused on the blade, trying to reach out and sense how to connect with it. He tried channeling fire, but that did nothing, and even when he used cold or lightning, they, too, seemed to reflect back from the tool.
Laughter came from Romandis, and Max opened his eyes to see the smith staring at him.
“You use magic?”
Nodding, Max saw a few worn teeth appear as the kemonomimi smiled.
“This isn’t a tool that uses magic. It uses your life.”
Tapping his chest twice, Romandis held out his hand and waited for Max to give him the tool.
After holding it, for a moment, a grunt came, and Max watched as the blade changed color, turning blue for a few seconds before losing its glow.
Romandis took a deep breath and sighed.
“Forging weapons here requires one to give their own life. Growing stronger allows you to do more. The problem comes with having to recover.”
Tapping the blade against a glass table, Romandis frowned.
“Many smiths have burned themselves out by not recovering between jobs, and ended up losing a journey that is not meant to be done in a day.”
He gave the tool back to Max and smiled.
“Try to see if you can get it to work. If you can, then you will be able to use the other tools in here. For now, let me go search through my stonewood stores. How big are you wanting this staff?”
Max grinned and held his hand about a foot above his head.
“Just a little taller than me.”
“So not very long,” Romandis joked as he turned and moved toward a doorway at the end of the wall.
As he left, Max sensed Aimee moving toward him.
“Are you certain this is wise? We could buy you a staff!”
Shaking his head, Max grinned at her.

“No. I need to make my own for now,” Max replied with a sigh. “Let’s say I take a weapon from someone else, and it fails during a fight. I could blame them, but even worse, I might die. This way, I’ll know the limits of the weapon and what it can and can’t do.”
Max leaned closer as he spun the tool in his hand.
“Besides, you don’t want to miss out if I’m able to do more.”
Her scales shifted on the ridge of her snout.
“Do you have any other secrets you want to share with me?”
Shaking his head, he grinned.
“Nope. Just that I enjoy baking and making weapons.”
***
Max sat on the glass chair, holding a piece of stonewood in his hand and the clear knife in the other. He slowly moved it across the wood, listening to Romandis as the smith spoke in a slow and quiet tone.
“Breathe. Think about the tool as an extension of you. It obeys your desires and requires your life to work. Slide it along the wood. Imagine it taking off just a few slivers.”
Max felt the blade catch and jump as it moved down the two-foot section he held.
He could feel the tool in his hand, knew what he wanted, but there was some disconnect between it and him.
Over and over he scraped, listening to the sound, wanting it to change.
“Slow… breathe slower. Feel the tool. It is part of your hand.”
Romandis paused for a moment as Max continued to scrape the glass against the wood.
“Remember what you said about when you crafted a weapon. You felt like it was a part of you. The way it infused you and you felt connected with each strike of the hammer. This is the same. It is a part of you.”
Those images played over and over in his head. Max knew he was smiling, thinking about each weapon he had crafted. The hammer he had made for the young boy, Brian. Those green eyes and red hair and the smile he had when Max handed that tool to him.
A tug came inside his chest.
Like a thread somehow appearing, Max searched for it, not trying to grab and tear it, knowing from casting and crafting how delicate this could sometimes be.
Somehow Romandis seemed to notice the change.
“Yes… feel that connection. Let it grow…”
Max took another breath in slowly, holding it, filling his lungs, and the sensation of that thread seemed to become stronger. It crept along his chest, moving toward his shoulder and down his arm.

Right before it reached his hand, Max started to breathe faster, and his heart started to race. As he did the thread began to retract, moving back toward his chest.
“Slow down! Breathe slow. Relax! Do not force it!”
The smith’s words made him pause, slowing down his breath again and controlling his excited heart. It took about fifteen seconds to stop the retreating thread completely, and finally it began to once more move toward his hand.
As it reached his wrist, Max forced himself to stay calm and remembered that connection to everything he had ever made.
Two more breaths, and the thread entered his hand, wrapping around the hilt. It felt like someone had just kicked him in the chest.
Immediately, the thread expanded, and power flowed from him into the tool.
[Weapon Crafting Has Evolved]
[New Knowledge Gained]
[New Weapon Blueprints Acquired]
Pain came as his mind felt the flooding of information enter his head.
It took a moment to stop seeing stars, even with his eyes closed and the sound of Romandis finally reached him.
“Stop! Stop cutting!”
Max opened his eyes, looking down at the piece of wood he had been holding, dragging the blade across.
The knife glowed like a torch, casting a blue glow much brighter than what it had looked like when Romandis had held it and demonstrated.
Four sections of wood had fallen to the floor, and the blade was almost to where his fingers were, holding the wood.
“Who are you?” the smith asked, his shock not hidden by his tone.
“How… how can you have this much power?”
Having not answered, Max stared at the tool, holding it upward and felt his life flowing into it. The pain was gone, and he knew there was so much more he could give, yet Max decided to check just in case.
[Simple Health Check]
*****
HP: 16,583/16,700
*****
Max was amazed at how fast he was burning his hit points, yet he knew if he needed to, using regeneration would bring them all back.
I could technically keep this going forever with regeneration…

“You need to lower that amount before you drop dead!” Romandis exclaimed. “Breathe, keep an eye on the blade, and try to reduce how much it pulls from you!”
Nodding, Max began taking deep, slow breaths and let them out, focusing on lessening the life he felt coming from his chest.
Seconds ticked by, and finally the connection began to wane some, the thread shrinking in size and the light of the tool going dim.
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“Every day you amaze me, Max,” she muttered.

16-1 Chapter 290a

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1923214/chapter-290a 2025-01-16;

“Finally!” Dexic shouted as she pulled her sword from the eye socket of the fairy boss. “I’m glad you two managed to clip her wings.”
Tanila nodded even though the warrior couldn’t see her response.
“Elf tits, that thing wasn’t fun, but the worst was all of its summons!” Fowl exclaimed, the sound of crushed pixies and fairies under his boot making a squelching sound as he walked through the scorched forest.
Over two dozen bodies were burnt, frozen, or pulverized from this fight, and while it hadn’t been easy, Fowl never once seemed truly challenged.
“Seems so anticlimactic if I’m honest,” Cordellia stated as she moved to where Tanila stood quietly and gave her shoulder a squeeze. “Took us far longer to reach this thing than I had expected after the pace Se—we used to travel at.”
“You can say his name,” Tanila whispered. “I know he’s still alive. I can… feel him, and my necklace hasn’t changed.”
Dexic had gone from killing the boss to cutting off pieces as the body began to fade. She glanced at Fowl, who was picking up parts and storing them as well.
“What should I do to help?” she asked.
Fowl shrugged and moved closer to the gold-armored warrior.
“Nothing. It’s been two months, and she still believes Seth is alive somewhere. I…”
The dwarven warrior took a deep breath and let it out slowly, replacing his armor with normal clothes via his storage and crossed his arms. Slowly, he stroked his beard as he studied the trio, who were huddled together as always.
“Batrire says she believes Tanila. Me… I know he wouldn’t leave like that. Not without at least a goodbye letter. He especially wouldn’t have been gone this long on his own. She has checked with the elven kingdom, and I have made contact with a few back in my kingdom, and no one has seen or heard anything about his whereabouts.”
“That leaves the queens,” Dexic replied, swapping out her equipment as she stood next to Fowl. “Everett and Tom both showed us the letter that came. Somehow, I don’t think our fearless leader really believes them.”
As the trio moved toward them, Batrire gave a forced smile, and Tanila moved at her usual zombie-like pace.
“Would you like to open the chest?” Fowl asked, his eyes locked on Tanila.
She shook her head, and the tiniest grin appeared for a moment.
“You go ahead. We all know how much you enjoy doing so.”
“Bah! As much as you all know I enjoy chests, I have had my fill of them lately. Perhaps someone else here should get a turn to enjoy them as much as I have.”
Dexic snickered, and a few groans came as their healer and archer picked up on the joke that had been made.
“I’ll do it,” Cordellia stated as she moved toward the small silver chest that had appeared. A relief of tiny fairies and pixies decorated the outside. “Seems anticlimactic for sure. That chest is so small.”
A groan came from Dexic, who followed the archer and went to see what was inside.
Moving till he stood next to Tanila, Fowl gave her hand a squeeze and looked up at her green eyes, seeing the redness that never left them.
“He’s alive. If there’s one thing we know about”—Fowl paused, glancing over his shoulder, and lowered his voice—“Max, it's that he loves you, and he will fight every god there is for you. Keep moving on and trusting he will return. Just know when he does, you can flaunt how far you are in the tower. I mean, we just beat the level forty-five boss!”
Sniffing, Tanila grinned and stored her staff, reached out with both arms, and pulled the dwarven warrior close.
Batrire gave them a second before wrapping her arms around the pair and held Tanila as she shook a little.
“Thank you,” she whispered. “Thank you for believing that he is alive like I do. Se—Max will appreciate how you two are loving on me.”
Batrire shushed her as she rubbed her elven friend’s back.
“We’re family, dear. This is what family does. Now, let’s go over to that chest and make fun of the crap the tower decides to give us.”

Coughing and clearing her throat, Tanila wiped her eyes and nodded.
Each dwarf took one of their friends' hands, and they walked together along the scorched, brown dirt, unable to truly celebrate the achievement of being only five floors away from the halfway point in the tower.
Without Max there, each of them felt the victory was hollow.

PAT 16-1 290a **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 290a**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/114389637 2024-11-13;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1923214/chapter-290a 2024-11-26;

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17 Chapter 291

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1925149/chapter-291 2025-01-16;

Chapter 291
Max felt Aimee’s eyes on him as he slowly carved off a section of the wood Romandis had given him.
Small strips lay on the floor, and Max felt himself drawn to this simple task.

How many times did I whittle wood as a kid? Yet now… this feels so different. Like it's a part of me.
Shaving the staff, Max let the wood almost guide him. It was as if something inside told him where to leave a little more of a bump, while another had him cut deeper, creating a groove.
The entire time, Romandis stood next to him, giving soft instructions at first and then went silent upon seeing Max work so quickly through the wood.
Once the staff was done, Max picked up the etching tool and began to carve runes he knew from back in his world.
"What are those?"
"Similar to what your world uses for enchanting. Except I'm going to try something different."
As he poured his life into the tool, the clear glass turning blue, Max took it slow, trying to add his mana to the process.
Sweat started to bead up on his head, running down his nose.
Immediately the drain he felt from his chest seemed to grow as Max fought with controlling that flow and adding a totally different one.
Breathe… slow down… trust the skill and yourself…
Repeating the words he had heard so many times from his skill, Max wished it would guide him now, but nothing came. Whatever it was doing had its full attention.
Clearing his mind, Max imagined another thread, this one connecting to every part of his body and holding the mana that he knew flowed inside him. Tanila had talked about magic and the mana within the world. How every creature seemed to be filled with it, which was why his skill was broken, replacing the mana he spent with each life he consumed.
Now, he focused on that. His entire being was filled with this source of energy, and he just needed to direct it.
Flames began to form around the hand with the etching tool, and Max ignored the gasp of shock from the smith.
As he carved, he felt the power of the fire he desired flowing into those runes.
I can be the elemental core.
It was like a lightstone went off in his head, and Max felt the change immediately.
[Weapon Crafting Has Evolved]
[Mana Control Skill Acquired]
[Elemental Mastery Has Evolved]
[New Skill Forming]
[Elemental Mana Control Acquired]
[Processing…. Processing]
[Elemental Mana Control - Rare]
[New Knowledge Gained]
His eyes hurt, and Max had to yank his hand back from the staff he was holding, feeling his mind erupt with so many things he had never understood until now.
Everything you tried to tell me… tried to lead me to… this was it!
All those moments his skill tried to get him to infuse his magic when crafting was to possibly learn this skill. Max's own affinity and power was the only conduit he needed.
"What are you doing?" Romandis asked as the smith drew close to the flaming hand held high in the air.
"Watch," Max replied, opening his eyes and then winking one at the kemonomimi, who stood there, jaw opened and eyes wide.
His mind raced, ran with the knowledge he felt and knew inside.
Max's core burned. His entire body was alive as his life force and his mana combined, creating a symphony of something entirely new.
Slivers of wood fell to the floor in a gentle rain, the spot in which they had once lain, now replaced with flaming runes.
Time seemed to slow down as Max turned the staff, adding line after line.

Once he knew the runes were done, he focused his power and drew upon lightning, arcs occasionally sparking from his hand to the staff, setting upon it with a new vigor.
***
He was spent.
Sweat pooled underneath him, and Max could feel the tiredness of his body and mind.
[Simple Health Check]
*****
HP: 5,279/16,700
*****
I guess I spent a little more health than I imagined I would.
[Regeneration]
His life force began to return as his skill felt like a cheat compared to most who had the Weapon Crafting skill.
[*Inspect Weapon*]
*****
Legendary Elemental Staff
+ 100 Intelligence and Wisdom
Elemental Casting - Elemental spells cast by user are 25% stronger
Soul Bonded
*****
His breathing slowed down as his body recovered quickly, but Max couldn't help but wonder about the staff that felt like an extension of him.
No, it *was* an extension of him.
He could feel the power that flowed from it, and likewise it seemed like his own mana reached to the very fibers of the staff.
"How? How can you do that?"
The hand that touched his shoulder softly felt like it was barely there.
Max turned his head and saw the smith bent down, his eyes fixated on the weapon that felt like it radiated with power.
"I told you I can craft weapons. I'll do what I can to teach you later, but if I said I was tired—"
"I don't know how you are still alive!" exclaimed Romandis. "From what I just saw you do, I would expect any other crafter of weapons to have died long ago! Yet I can tell you are completely fine!"
Max nodded and smiled.
"Tell me, that axe you are working on. What enchantment are they hoping to acquire?"
The kemonomimi looked at the axe head still on the table and turned back to Max, eyes almost trembling.
"Anything! They would take anything! To know you can do that and it appears not fail, they would pay so much for it!"
Seeing how the very fur on the smith's body began to rise, almost standing like he was filled with electricity, Max grinned.
"Would they pay you then? Could you get a new door?"
Laughter radiated from around the room when Romandis clamped a hand down on Max's arm and roared.
"I could buy two doors!"
Taking a deep breath, Max turned his attention to where Aimee was, seeing her looking at him.
Her head was cocked, and for the first time he noticed confusion or something else he hadn't seen before displayed.
"Are you okay?"
She shook her head, startled at his question, and nodded quickly.
"You… you say that the one captured you… I have heard stories… we all have heard stories of the conflict between that one and Igarra. Neither bothers the other now because of the damage they cause and the way it appears neither wins. Yet…"

He could sense her trembling under the cloak. The vibrations of her body as she gazed at him gave away that she was struggling with something.
“The power you display… if you are that strong, and he was able to collar you so easily… how strong must those two be? How can one of us ever hope to reach that level?”
Clearing his throat, Max summoned a shard of ice and put it in his mouth, ignoring the look Romandis gave him.
“I don’t know, but I want you to understand, I’m doing everything I can to get stronger. My goal is to one day get revenge.”
Aimee winced, flinching slightly, and her eyes blinked rapidly a few times before she nodded.
“That is a scary thought,” she whispered.
Nodding, Max turned his attention back to the smith, who was enthralled with the ice he was sucking on.
“Do you have a clean glass container that won’t melt? We could put it on your forge, and you could have some water in a bit that is clear.”
Without hesitating, the kemonomimi was across the room, tossing some things to the side. He lifted up a two-by-two-foot glass container, dumping it out and rubbing the inside with his hands.
“Would this work?”
Max nodded and stood up, stretching before dismissing the shard of ice, and took the box, setting it on the edge of the forge.
He summoned half a dozen small shards of ice and set them inside the glass that was starting to heat up.
“In a few minutes I’d pull that off. For now, let me see what you have done with this axe.”
***
Romandis held the finished axe in his hands. Max had helped shape the wooden handle, and together they had created something exceptional.
It was only an epic creation, as all he could do was imbue it with spells and ensure the wooden part was perfect.
“Never… never have I held a weapon so great as this,” the smith said as he ran his claws along the runes that no longer glowed. “I… I cannot pay you what this is worth, but know I owe you far more than you will ever understand.”
It was Max’s turn to give a pat on someone’s back, and as he gently did so against Romandis’s furry pelt, his smile grew.
“Actually, if it wasn’t for your instruction and guidance, I doubt I would have learned what I needed to know. I’m sure there are many things you can still teach me about your craft, and I will endeavor to return the favor about mine. Together, we can see what the gods will allow us to create.”
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Aimee’s gaze had been constant during dinner, and he had ignored it, having been looked at as she was doing now many times in the last few months.
“What if you can’t return?”
A frown came, and Max bobbed his head twice, seeing the movement in Aimee’s eyes as she stared at him.
“I’ll keep looking. No matter what, I have to return.”

“But what if… what if there isn’t a way? What if you can’t defeat the one who brought you here, and Igarra can’t help you get home? Then what? Would you be content to stay here?”
Her voice was different, and Max wanted to ignore what he thought he could detect.
“I don’t know. When I say my heart belongs to someone back home, and I have family and friends I need to protect, I…” He sighed as he played with his spork and the remaining vegetables on his plate. “Have you ever wanted something so badly you would do anything for it?”
“Yes!” she exclaimed, her reply startling herself and the others who were dining quietly in the room. Holding up a hand and giving a nod of her head, Aimee apologized to everyone looking. “Sorry.”
Leaning closer to Max, she put her hand on his arm for a moment before removing it.
“I left my home seeking power. That event led me to you finding me, a slave, a life I don’t want to discuss because of how bad it would have been. You saved me, showed me power that I could never imagine and then took me home… Max… you…”
A single tear fell before she sniffed, and her whole demeanor changed.
“You protected me, striking down one of the most powerful women I know. Then you protected my mother from anyone who might have sought to harm me through her. Now I sit here, in a room, eating food and knowing that soon you shall earn more tokens than I ever imagined with ease. Until we reach the inner parts of the city, I doubt any will be able to stand before you.”
Shifting in his chair, Max just smiled, leaving his utensil on the plate.
“And what if you’re stuck with me forever? Is that your question?”
She nodded twice and then shook her head.
“It was, but now I know that answer and have made up my mind. No matter what I shall rise to power like you. Together, we shall become a name people fear.”
He started to protest, but she raised and hand and shook her head, her eye slits lowering halfway.
“No, Max. Never forget. If people do not fear you here, they will try to hurt you. They will try to use you. When you fight, there is no mercy. Those who give that will never receive it.”
She stood up, picking up her plate and his, taking them to the counter and leaving him to sit there.
What kind of world is this?
Lost in that thought for a moment, Max knew the answer before he had even finished it.
It’s like my world… only, the rules there make people believe they are safe… If the strong desire it, none of them are.

PAT 17 291 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 -**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389634 2024-11-14; https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1925149/chapter-291 2024-11-27;

Max felt Aimee’s eyes on him as he slowly carved off a section of the wood Romandis had given him.
Small strips lay on the floor, and Max felt himself drawn to this simple task.
How many times did I whittle wood as a kid? Yet now… this feels so different. Like it’s a part of me.

Shaving the staff, Max let the wood almost guide him. It was as if something inside told him where to leave a little more of a bump, while another had him cut deeper, creating a groove.
The entire time, Romandis stood next to him, giving soft instructions at first and then went silent upon seeing Max work so quickly through the wood.
Once the staff was done, Max picked up the etching tool and began to carve runes he knew from back in his world.
“What are those?”
“Similar to what your world uses for enchanting. Except I’m going to try something different.”
As he poured his life into the tool, the clear glass turning blue, Max took it slow, trying to add his mana to the process.
Sweat started to bead up on his head, running down his nose. Immediately the drain he felt from his chest seemed to grow as Max fought with controlling that flow and adding a totally different one.
Breathe… slow down… trust the skill and yourself…
Repeating the words he had heard so many times from his skill, Max wished it would guide him now, but nothing came. Whatever it was doing had its full attention.
Clearing his mind, Max imagined another thread, this one connecting to every part of his body and holding the mana that he knew flowed inside him. Tanila had talked about magic and the mana within the world. How every creature seemed to be filled with it, which was why his skill was broken, replacing the mana he spent with each life he consumed.
Now, he focused on that. His entire being was filled with this source of energy, and he just needed to direct it.
Flames began to form around the hand with the etching tool, and Max ignored the gasp of shock from the smith.
As he carved, he felt the power of the fire he desired flowing into those runes.
I can be the elemental core.
It was like a lightstone went off in his head, and Max felt the change immediately.
[Weapon Crafting Has Evolved]
[Mana Control Skill Acquired]
[Elemental Mastery Has Evolved]
[New Skill Forming]
[Elemental Mana Control Acquired]
[Processing…. Processing]
[Elemental Mana Control - Rare]
[New Knowledge Gained]

His eyes hurt, and Max had to yank his hand back from the staff he was holding, feeling his mind erupt with so many things he had never understood until now.
Everything you tried to tell me… tried to lead me to… this was it!
All those moments his skill tried to get him to infuse his magic when crafting was to possibly learn this skill. Max's own affinity and power was the only conduit he needed.
"What are you doing?" Romandis asked as the smith drew close to the flaming hand held high in the air.
"Watch," Max replied, opening his eyes and then winking one at the kemonomimi, who stood there, jaw opened and eyes wide.
His mind raced, ran with the knowledge he felt and knew inside. Max's core burned. His entire body was alive as his life force and his mana combined, creating a symphony of something entirely new. Slivers of wood fell to the floor in a gentle rain, the spot in which they had once lain, now replaced with flaming runes.
Time seemed to slow down as Max turned the staff, adding line after line.
Once he knew the runes were done, he focused his power and drew upon lightning, arcs occasionally sparking from his hand to the staff, setting upon it with a new vigor.
***
He was spent.
Sweat pooled underneath him, and Max could feel the tiredness of his body and mind.
[Simple Health Check]
*****
HP: 5,279/16,700
*****
I guess I spent a little more health than I imagined I would.
[Regeneration]
His life force began to return as his skill felt like a cheat compared to most who had the Weapon Crafting skill.
[*Inspect Weapon*]
*****
Legendary Elemental Staff
+ 100 Intelligence and Wisdom
Elemental Casting - Elemental spells cast by user are 25% stronger
Soul Bonded
*****
His breathing slowed down as his body recovered quickly, but Max couldn't help but wonder about the staff that felt like an extension of him.
No, it *was* an extension of him.

He could feel the power that flowed from it, and likewise it seemed like his own mana reached to the very fibers of the staff.
“How? How can you do that?”
The hand that touched his shoulder softly felt like it was barely there.
Max turned his head and saw the smith bent down, his eyes fixated on the weapon that felt like it radiated with power.
“I told you I can craft weapons. I’ll do what I can to teach you later, but if I said I was tired—”
“I don’t know how you are still alive!” exclaimed Romandis. “From what I just saw you do, I would expect any other crafter of weapons to have died long ago! Yet I can tell you are completely fine!”
Max nodded and smiled.
“Tell me, that axe you are working on. What enchantment are they hoping to acquire?”
The kemonomimi looked at the axe head still on the table and turned back to Max, eyes almost trembling.
“Anything! They would take anything! To know you can do that and it appears not fail, they would pay so much for it!”
Seeing how the very fur on the smith’s body began to rise, almost standing like he was filled with electricity, Max grinned.
“Would they pay you then? Could you get a new door?”
Laughter radiated from around the room when Romandis clamped a hand down on Max’s arm and roared.
“I could buy two doors!”
Taking a deep breath, Max turned his attention to where Aimee was, seeing her looking at him.
Her head was cocked, and for the first time he noticed confusion or something else he hadn't seen before displayed.
“Are you okay?”
She shook her head, startled at his question, and nodded quickly.
“You… you say that the one captured you… I have heard stories… we all have heard stories of the conflict between that one and Igarra. Neither bothers the other now because of the damage they cause and the way it appears neither wins. Yet…”
He could sense her trembling under the cloak. The vibrations of her body as she gazed at him gave away that she was struggling with something.
“The power you display… if you are that strong, and he was able to collar you so easily… how strong must those two be? How can one of us ever hope to reach that level?”
Clearing his throat, Max summoned a shard of ice and put it in his mouth, ignoring the look Romandis gave him.

“I don’t know, but I want you to understand, I’m doing everything I can to get stronger. My goal is to one day get revenge.”
Aimee winced, flinching slightly, and her eyes blinked rapidly a few times before she nodded.
“That is a scary thought,” she whispered.
Nodding, Max turned his attention back to the smith, who was enthralled with the ice he was sucking on.
“Do you have a clean glass container that won’t melt? We could put it on your forge, and you could have some water in a bit that is clear.”
Without hesitating, the kemonomimi was across the room, tossing some things to the side. He lifted up a two-by-two-foot glass container, dumping it out and rubbing the inside with his hands.
“Would this work?”
Max nodded and stood up, stretching before dismissing the shard of ice, and took the box, setting it on the edge of the forge.
He summoned half a dozen small shards of ice and set them inside the glass that was starting to heat up.
“In a few minutes I’d pull that off. For now, let me see what you have done with this axe.”
***
Romandis held the finished axe in his hands. Max had helped shape the wooden handle, and together they had created something exceptional.
It was only an epic creation, as all he could do was imbue it with spells and ensure the wooden part was perfect.
“Never… never have I held a weapon so great as this,” the smith said as he ran his claws along the runes that no longer glowed. “I… I cannot pay you what this is worth, but know I owe you far more than you will ever understand.”
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18 Chapter 292

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1926929/chapter-292 2025-01-16;

Chapter 292
“You’re certain you don’t want any armor? Just that ratty robe?”
Max nodded, ignoring Kauakan’s gaze, unsure whether his eyes were conveying something or not. Two sets of slits would occasionally cover his eyes, one pair from the side and the other from the top.
“The goal is to appear weak, correct?”
“Yes… but still… one solid attack from your opponent might take your head off or pierce your heart. Surely, you must fear that.”
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“Perhaps I have misjudged you and your servant. Both of you are way smarter than I expected. I shall leave you two alone, and when the time comes, one of my servants will bring you to the arena floor. Have fun tonight, and make us some money, *Ifrit* .”
Max almost laughed at how Kauakan accented the name he chose to be called.
When he had left through the solid black glass door and left him and Aimee alone, Max turned to see her studying him again.
“Should I have gotten a nicer robe?” he asked, pulling the hood off.
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“She… she was a fighter… This was the path she took for power. If one can manage it, they can grow stronger here but must quit before the opponents are able to kill them. There is a reason why some sit at the top.”
Moving to the only other chair in the room, Max sat down, turning the staff slowly in his hands as it lay across his knees.
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"When we kill someone stronger, we take their life force… It's like… when you crafted that staff, and you used your own life to make it, all that power inside you is up for grabs. If someone can kill you and absorb it, they will become stronger."
Max felt like he had been hit with a bucket of cold water.
A chill ran down his spine, and he couldn't help but shake from it.
"Is that the only way to get stronger?"
Sighing, Aimee shook her head.
"No, but the other methods are pointless for those who desire strength. One will die of old age long before they can get any real power. That weaponsmith Romandis would be much stronger if he killed a few people. Not everyone has the stomach for that. Most men don't. They aren't like you."
She was grinning again, and a weird twinkle was in her eyes as she said those last words.
"You think I'm a killer?"
"No," she scoffed. "You do not seek power, and yet you take it from each person you kill. I can defeat creatures and gain some power, but it is much harder for us that way. Nothing in our land is weak. The sand culls the weak. Our people enslave the weak. Only the strong rise to a place of honor. Yet if one rises too far, they become a target."
"Couldn't someone kill another while they slept and grow stronger?"
"Yes, but not like you think… Our god, Suljin, has made it so that true power comes from real combat. You could hold a devil cat so that it can't attack, and I could deliver the final blow, ending its life, but somehow she would know, and I would not be granted much if any power at all. However, if one attacked me, and I fought from inside a small cave, using a spear and barely escaped with my life, then she would honor me with great power."
"And if you kill someone in their sleep? What if they fought back?"
"They would receive nothing. The power they gained would be minimal at best. Most likely no more than if a slave attacked and you slaughtered them."
"What about if you wanted to fight someone, but they chose not to?"
Shaking her head, Aimee sighed, scratching the underside of her jaw.
"Why worry about cowards? If someone won't fight, you can kill them. The power is still minimal but there. But ask yourself this question. If you knew you would die unless you fought back, would you still stand there and do nothing?"
"Of course not."
"Exactly!" exclaimed Aimee as she pointed a finger at him. "Everyone fights back when they understand that death is the only guarantee if they don't. A slave who knows their master is coming to kill them will fight like a cornered beast, prepared to give everything they have because only by winning can they escape death for another day."
Max said nothing for a minute, pondering the answers he had heard, wondering what kind of god would design a world that was so brutal and harsh.
The worst part of it all was that it sounded exactly like his skill.
Everyone has something like me... When they kill something, it makes them stronger...
"One last question, and then I'll stop," Max said, as he tried to ignore that Aimee had closed her eyes and leaned her head against the black glass wall.
"Go ahead," she replied, her eyes still shut.
"How do you measure this power you gain upon defeating someone? Is it a certain number of stats or a skill or what?"
Her left eye opened up completely while her right remained shut. Turning her head sideways, she studied Max a moment.
"That is a very specific question for something you seem to know nothing about," Aimee stated. "The answer is it varies. Each person can kill anyone, yet nothing is gained from those too far beneath you. Real gains come from those much stronger. When you kill someone, their soul enters you, it is said. Sometimes you might grow

stronger, or smarter or faster. The power or skill you have might improve, increased by the strength of their soul."
Sitting up and opening both eyes, Aimee leaned forward.
"Sometimes, one might gain a new skill or ability. When that happens…"
Chuckling, she shook her head and leaned back.
"That is why Igarra is so dangerous. She is rumored to have a dozen skills, all gained from those she killed along the way."
Closing her eyes, Aimee's breathing slowed down, and Max stopped pestering her with questions.
Is this something based on you? Can a world function like this? How?!
Silence was his reply, and it tore Max up inside.
How messed up is this system?
Frustrated, he moved his chair to the opposite wall and leaned back, closing his eyes and preparing himself for what he had to do.
***
The *arena* did not impress Max at all.
Standing before a gate made of black glass bars, he watched as a pair of fighters fought with weapons. One was a large rhinokin he had been told by Aimee. He wore some leather armor that looked weird in how it was fastened around his massive body. *Crusher* was the name that the announcer who was shouting out commentary had called the towering fighter.
In his hands was a two-handed maul. It was about ten feet long, as tall as Crusher was, and while it didn't move fast, Max knew one hit would definitely achieve what the fighter's name was.
His opponent was a fast-moving insect with six arms. They had two shields, two spears, and two swords, and its attacks had occasionally pierced or cut the hide of Crusher.
"And Emoakay lands another barrage of attacks!"
Max was impressed with the speed of the insect. Its green body flittered around the dark brown sand on the arena floor. Each attack that Crusher sent was dodged, and the moment it passed, the insect moved in, landing one or two hits against the rhinokin's arms and legs.
The crowd cheered and roared as the pair fought, and Max couldn't help but wonder about the menagerie of beings in the arena.
Maybe five hundred tops fit inside the small seating area that was provided. Four reserved sections housed the four different leaders of this ring. Each sat on wooden chairs while the rest of the spectators stood on stacked layers of glass rings.
The actual fighting space was about twenty-five yards in diameter, and the walls were fifteen feet high. Different colors of the sand stained the arena floor, and Max couldn't help but wonder what all had bled or died on this place.
A roar came, and Max watched as Emoakay had thrust both spears forward while slicing with the pair of swords into Crusher's right leg after the weapon had passed overhead.
It looked like a good attack, except Max saw what was about to happen before the insect did.
A crunching sound was followed by green and yellow gore washing over the field as Crusher's fist came down, smashing the six-foot-tall insect like a bug.
"AND CRUSHER HAS CRUSHED HIS OPPONENT! Let's hope Emoakay's wife and children weren't expecting him home for dinner!"
Roars of laughter and cheers came as the crowd reacted to the announcer's statement.
Max kept his eyes on the boxes, seeing a large kemonomimi that was covered in the first real metal armor that looked worth wearing. It was colored black, standing out against the orange and yellow fur. Two swords were resting against his wooden chair, and a trio of other cat warriors stood behind him, their heads always scanning around.

It had smiled while the praying mantis on the far end appeared upset, waving its blade arms in the air, and the guards that were behind it backed up some.
“You’re up next, don’t die.”
Max scoffed at Aimee’s sudden joke, and as Crusher made his way back to a gate on the other side of the arena floor, a crew came in, scraping off the section of sand that had once been Emoakay’s body. After depositing it in a cart, they wheeled it out.
“Tonight, we have a new fighter! Our favorite master of destruction and chaos, Kauakan has told us that Ifrit is going to burn down his competition!”
Laughter and some cheers came as the gate Max stood behind pulled upward.
When he could finally move past it without ducking, he strode out there at a steady pace, moving to the section that had been painted a moment ago by one of the workers who had removed the body.
Laughter came as he moved, shrouded in the robe that was too small and carrying a simple wooden staff.
“His opponents are some of our favorites! The twin Flesh Strippers!”
Max felt his face change as he looked up at Kauakan and saw the insect lean forward, nodding and banging his two claws together.
From the other side of the arena a pair of tigerkin, both about eight feet tall and wearing leather armor across their bodies, approached.
Each of them had bright yellow fur and black marks that looked identical. The only difference was one was a boy and the other was a girl.
Again his eyes widened as he stared at the sister of the pair, seeing she had far more muscles and was wider and bulkier than her brother.
In her hands was a large axe. Her brother had a pair of scimitars.
They moved to about ten yards from him, standing on the spot marked for them.
A groan came from Max as the brother pointed both weapons at him and roared, causing the audience to cheer even louder.
“You have one minute to place all bets! When the drums sound, no more bets will be taken! Decide now! Will Ifrit show us something besides a man hidden under a tattered robe, or will the Flesh Rippers once more feast upon another victim?!”
Movement all over the arena took place, and Max could feel the spectators moving to where bet takers were stationed at the top, middle, and bottom of each area.
With his face still hidden, Max wanted to frown, but inside him the part that was always there, the hunger and thirst for his skill called out.
What are you doing?
Max almost took a step back, shocked at the sudden voice in his head.
Where have you been?
Win and I’ll tell you… lose and… well, it won’t matter.
Gripping his staff tighter, Max found himself smiling.
It wasn’t until that moment he realized just how much he had felt alone.
At that moment, Max felt like he was whole.

PAT 18 292 **Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 292**

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114389631 at 2024-11-15 9:53 (publish-18hrs ago)=2024-11-14 15:53;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1926929/chapter-292 2024-11-28 at 12-28;

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“They would receive nothing. The power they gained would be minimal at best. Most likely no more than if a slave attacked and you slaughtered them.”
“What about if you wanted to fight someone, but they chose not to?”
Shaking her head, Aimee sighed, scratching the underside of her jaw.
“Why worry about cowards? If someone won’t fight, you can kill them. The power is still minimal but there. But ask yourself this question. If you knew you would die unless you fought back, would you still stand there and do nothing?”
“Of course not.”
“Exactly!” exclaimed Aimee as she pointed a finger at him.
“Everyone fights back when they understand that death is the only guarantee if they don’t. A slave who knows their master is coming to kill them will fight like a cornered beast, prepared to give everything they have because only by winning can they escape death for another day.”

Max said nothing for a minute, pondering the answers he had heard, wondering what kind of god would design a world that was so brutal and harsh.
The worst part of it all was that it sounded exactly like his skill.
Everyone has something like me… When they kill something, it makes them stronger…
"One last question, and then I'll stop," Max said, as he tried to ignore that Aimee had closed her eyes and leaned her head against the black glass wall.
"Go ahead," she replied, her eyes still shut.
"How do you measure this power you gain upon defeating someone? Is it a certain number of stats or a skill or what?"
Her left eye opened up completely while her right remained shut. Turning her head sideways, she studied Max a moment.
"That is a very specific question for something you seem to know nothing about," Aimee stated. "The answer is it varies. Each person can kill anyone, yet nothing is gained from those too far beneath you. Real gains come from those much stronger. When you kill someone, their soul enters you, it is said. Sometimes you might grow stronger, or smarter or faster. The power or skill you have might improve, increased by the strength of their soul."
Sitting up and opening both eyes, Aimee leaned forward.
"Sometimes, one might gain a new skill or ability. When that happens…"
Chuckling, she shook her head and leaned back.
"That is why Igarra is so dangerous. She is rumored to have a dozen skills, all gained from those she killed along the way."
Closing her eyes, Aimee's breathing slowed down, and Max stopped pestering her with questions.
Is this something based on you? Can a world function like this? How?!
Silence was his reply, and it tore Max up inside.
How messed up is this system?
Frustrated, he moved his chair to the opposite wall and leaned back, closing his eyes and preparing himself for what he had to do.
***
The *arena* did not impress Max at all.
Standing before a gate made of black glass bars, he watched as a pair of fighters fought with weapons. One was a large rhinokin he had been told by Aimee. He wore some leather armor that looked weird in how it was fastened around his massive body. *Crusher* was the name that the announcer who was shouting out commentary had called the towering fighter.

In his hands was a two-handed maul. It was about ten feet long, as tall as Crusher was, and while it didn’t move fast, Max knew one hit would definitely achieve what the fighter's name was.
His opponent was a fast-moving insect with six arms. They had two shields, two spears, and two swords, and its attacks had occasionally pierced or cut the hide of Crusher.
“And Emoakay lands another barrage of attacks!”
Max was impressed with the speed of the insect. Its green body flittered around the dark brown sand on the arena floor. Each attack that Crusher sent was dodged, and the moment it passed, the insect moved in, landing one or two hits against the rhinokin’s arms and legs.
The crowd cheered and roared as the pair fought, and Max couldn't help but wonder about the menagerie of beings in the arena.
Maybe five hundred tops fit inside the small seating area that was provided. Four reserved sections housed the four different leaders of this ring. Each sat on wooden chairs while the rest of the spectators stood on stacked layers of glass rings.
The actual fighting space was about twenty-five yards in diameter, and the walls were fifteen feet high. Different colors of the sand stained the arena floor, and Max couldn’t help but wonder what all had bled or died on this place.
A roar came, and Max watched as Emoakay had thrust both spears forward while slicing with the pair of swords into Crusher’s right leg after the weapon had passed overhead.
It looked like a good attack, except Max saw what was about to happen before the insect did.
A crunching sound was followed by green and yellow gore washing over the field as Crusher’s fist came down, smashing the six-foot-tall insect like a bug.
“AND CRUSHER HAS CRUSHED HIS OPPONENT! Let’s hope Emoakay’s wife and children weren’t expecting him home for dinner!”
Roars of laughter and cheers came as the crowd reacted to the announcer’s statement.
Max kept his eyes on the boxes, seeing a large kemonomimi that was covered in the first real metal armor that looked worth wearing. It was colored black, standing out against the orange and yellow fur. Two swords were resting against his wooden chair, and a trio of other cat warriors stood behind him, their heads always scanning around.
It had smiled while the praying mantis on the far end appeared upset, waving its blade arms in the air, and the guards that were behind it backed up some.

“You’re up next, don’t die.”
Max scoffed at Aimee’s sudden joke, and as Crusher made his way back to a gate on the other side of the arena floor, a crew came in, scraping off the section of sand that had once been Emoakay’s body. After depositing it in a cart, they wheeled it out.
“Tonight, we have a new fighter! Our favorite master of destruction and chaos, Kauakan has told us that Ifrit is going to burn down his competition!”
Laughter and some cheers came as the gate Max stood behind pulled upward.
When he could finally move past it without ducking, he strode out there at a steady pace, moving to the section that had been painted a moment ago by one of the workers who had removed the body.
Laughter came as he moved, shrouded in the robe that was too small and carrying a simple wooden staff.
“His opponents are some of our favorites! The twin Flesh Strippers!”
Max felt his face change as he looked up at Kauakan and saw the insect lean forward, nodding and banging his two claws together.
From the other side of the arena a pair of tigerkin, both about eight feet tall and wearing leather armor across their bodies, approached. Each of them had bright yellow fur and black marks that looked identical. The only difference was one was a boy and the other was a girl.
Again his eyes widened as he stared at the sister of the pair, seeing she had far more muscles and was wider and bulkier than her brother.
In her hands was a large axe. Her brother had a pair of scimitars. They moved to about ten yards from him, standing on the spot marked for them.
A groan came from Max as the brother pointed both weapons at him and roared, causing the audience to cheer even louder.
“You have one minute to place all bets! When the drums sound, no more bets will be taken! Decide now! Will Ifrit show us something besides a man hidden under a tattered robe, or will the Flesh Rippers once more feast upon another victim?!”
Movement all over the arena took place, and Max could feel the spectators moving to where bet takers were stationed at the top, middle, and bottom of each area.
With his face still hidden, Max wanted to frown, but inside him the part that was always there, the hunger and thirst for his skill called out.
What are you doing?

Max almost took a step back, shocked at the sudden voice in his head.
Where have you been?
Win and I'll tell you… lose and… well, it won't matter.
Gripping his staff tighter, Max found himself smiling.
It wasn't until that moment he realized just how much he had felt alone.
At that moment, Max felt like he was whole.

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Chapter 293
The drums started to sound, and while many groaned at having missed out on betting, cheers and shouts made the air almost vibrate from how loud it became.
"Now for the moment we all love! Will another new warrior die, their flame snuffed out in a moment, or shall they burn away their opponents and stand tall upon their ashes?! Fight!"
Four bells chimed, and the intensity of the spectators rose to a new frenzy as both of the Flesh Rippers spread out around Max. Each held their weapons ready, moving carefully, never taking steps that might leave them unprepared for an attack.
They had to move closer slightly, coming within seven yards of Max as the space between them and the wall shrank.
He, however, moved slowly to the middle of the arena, giving them as much space as they might desire.
Neither spoke, and yet Max could sense that somehow they were moving as one.
You seem relaxed. Tell me, are these a threat at all?
I doubt it. Regardless, is now the time to talk finally, or are you just having fun?
Laughter echoed in his head, and as many times as it had bothered him, Max couldn't help but smile.
Win. I have much to share, and your thirst for this pulled me from what I was lost in trying to do.
Both moved as one, somehow able to detect that Max wasn't one hundred percent focused on the pair. Sand shifted in a shower as their feet brought them toward him.
The two-handed axe came at him sideways, swinging so that it would take off his shoulders, while the two scimitars moved like a pair of scissors, attempting to cut off his legs and hips.
Even as they moved, Max read the movements, his Sonar skill and own understanding of his stats telling him everything there was to know.
They aren't a problem.
Shifting toward the sister, Max reached out with his free hand, stopping the axe's swing when he grabbed the shaft.
His staff moved in his left, deflecting both swords and sending one flying from the power he had used in it.
One moment the arena had been filled with noise that might deafen someone.
Now it was silent.
Sighing, Max lifted his head slightly, looking up at the sister, who was grunting, trying to pull her axe free from his grip.
The brother attempted another attack, losing this sword when Max parried and struck closer to the hilt, the vibration too much for him to hold on.
"Surrender?"

A scowl came, and the sister roared, spit flying at him as she lifted a leg, kicking at him, still not releasing the axe Max held on to.
His boot came up, a loud crunch of bones snapping when he kicked her clawed foot with his armored foot, taking her scowl away and bringing instead a cry.
“I offered,” Max stated as he threw the axe handle upward, sending the sister falling backward. His next move was to bring his staff around, cracking the skull of the brother and sending him face first into the sand.
As the sister fell toward the ground, Max was already turning back, his staff spinning so fast most couldn’t keep up with its speed.
It connected to the side of the larger warrior and sent her spinning, tumbling along the sand, until she hit the glass wall.
The silence that had been present for a moment was filled with a raucous noise of a crowd getting something they had clearly not anticipated. The beating that was being given was controlled, deliberate, and left no doubt that the Flesh Rippers were done.
Walking along the sand, Max moved to where the sister was, a wheeze coming from her mouth and nose as blood trickled out of both.
He had counted the number of ribs he heard break. Six.
No doubt a few had punctured her lungs, and the warrior seemed unable to catch her breath or move at all.
This is not how the cat and mouse story usually goes. Tell me, are you committed to doing what must be done? Have you changed so much since last we spoke?
Max wanted to argue and say that he was still the same person, but he knew he wasn’t.
If I want to get back to my world, I cannot be merciful, can I?
No.
He already knew the answer, yet hearing it, the way it came through, absolute, was exactly what Max needed.
The last bit of dregs of kindness were pushed down.
In his mind he saw only one thing. Tanila.
Her red hair, those amazing green eyes.
He could feel her lips against his.
An ache came as his mind struggled to remember how she smelled.
Time was taking that memory away.
He grabbed the foot, clamping on, and dragged her back across the sand to where her brother lay still.
Slowly, Max turned around and held his staff out at the crowd, watching their reaction, seeing the same look across every species and insect before him.
Recognizing it as one that his queens once wore.
He locked gazes, even under his hood, with Kauakan and saw the insect nod.
Twirling his staff around, Max let it glow with flames, creating a spinning inferno.
Sound once more began to grow soft and quiet as the spectators witnessed something Max figured most had never seen before.
Flames grew higher and higher as he held the staff above his head, sending them over ten feet high into the air.
When he stopped, the fireball he had been playing with hovered above him.
It was as tall as he was, and Max took a few steps back, his weapon still slightly covered with fire, and pointed it at the pair.
The scent of burning flesh and fur filled the air, and four seconds after the flames engulfed the pair, the crowd went wild.
Ifrit! Ifrit! Ifrit!
As the bodies burned, Max waited a moment and then gave a simple bow, turning and moving toward the gate he had come out of.
“THERE YOU HAVE IT! Today marks the birth of a new warrior! Ifrit has called down the flames from the skies! Let us see who can stand against him and not be turned to ash!”

More cheers sounded over the stomping of feet, claws, and other appendages.
As the gate lifted, Max saw Aimee nodding and smiling.
“You were strong.”
Max gave her a single nod and then moved down the hallway toward the room that he was supposed to wait in.
He still had one more fight to go.
***
Forgive me. I have exhausted everything I know or can recall to remove this thing that binds us. It is something strange, allowing the system to flow through and around it. Like a dam with release gates, it controls how much and where the water is permitted. As of right now I cannot find the lock which keeps it in place.
I understand. Are you done attempting to find it, or should I expect you to vanish once more?
He sensed a scoff in his mind and a thread of humor of some sort at his question.
Much has changed. You have grown stronger, and I see there are new things you have learned. I was able to stop the attempt to strip you of the skill you acquired, but it took more from me than I had anticipated. That slowed down my plan. Tell me what you have learned.
It appears two beings in this world have climbed the tower, and each has a section they call their own. We are in the city that belongs to one. Perhaps this place will protect us from the hunter. It appears neither is fond of the other. The other…
Max paused, ignoring Aimee, who seemed to be studying him. He was pretending to be resting but could feel her gaze.
This world… it seems to operate on a system like your skill. The only way to grow stronger is to defeat others of equal or greater power. Monsters do not give as much growth, I am told, as people, or beings do. How? Why?
There are many worlds like this. Does this surprise you? Even your own world is like this to a degree. While not to this level, do not the strong prey on the weak? Do not the ones who seek to grow stronger remove an obstacle above them?
But actual gains come from killing another. If in combat, the gains are more! Why?
Devour, Consume, Command. Which way is better to grow stronger?
Max barely was able to contain the shudder he felt at those three words.
Why does it have to be any of those?
Do you not grow stronger by devouring the flesh of animals? Can you be as strong if all you eat is plants?
Not wanting to get into a debate about food choices, Max groaned.
It is believed that meat is required to grow to ones true strength. Still, how does that okay the devouring of someone or something else?
Who gets to determine what is food? Does not the dragon look upon all creatures and see them as food? Only when the elves, human, dwarves, insects, or beastkin can grow strong enough to stop it, can they attempt to change what it devours to grow stronger.
Or have you forgotten those who command others to obey them? Are not the elves from your world under such a thing? Surely you can recall what Tanila—
Don’t say her name!
A moment of silence held, and Max tried to suppress the anger and hurt he felt.
Forgive me… I should have known that would not be a pleasant memory. But you have heard it said how they cannot resist the command given by their king. Tell me, do you doubt he grows stronger through that?
But… I mean…
Max had no reply, and he knew it. In a moment, everything he wanted to argue had been dashed to ground, shattered beyond repair. All the hopes that somewhere were worlds that didn’t have others who were required to destroy one another to get stronger.

That is a foolish thought, and you know it. No god would make a world where no chaos is present. Any power they gained from such a place would be lessened to almost nothing but a trickle.
Everyone who conquers the tower learns the lesson you must finally admit to.
Max sighed, even with his eyes closed and wanting to feign sleep he couldn't hold back.
One only gets stronger by defeating what is above them.
You have slaughtered tens of thousands of lives in the tower. Now tell me, after walking this world, is it any wonder that you see before you the very creatures you have fought and killed? Why do you think that is?
His skill didn't wait. It knew Max didn't know.
Because the system is designed to test all who attempt to grow. Out of a million, perhaps one has the willpower, the conviction, the desire, rage, or whatever else you wish to call it to not quit and is willing to devour anything they must. They are willing to command anyone they can. Just like you, they are willing to consume whatever is required to grow strong enough for whatever their desire is.
Pain.
It felt like his chest was being sat on by a giant.
Breathing became harder as the truth he had fought against for so long set in.
Max considered all the lives of creatures he had killed in the dungeons and tower. Each time he had deemed it okay because he needed to grow stronger. He lied to get into dungeons that were not safe, hoping someone would help him take down something he couldn't, just so that he could gain more strength.
Even now he was in this place, not just seeking wins so he could earn tokens or fame.
No.
Max knew exactly why he was here.
I need to kill the hunter. I have to become strong enough to consume his power so I can return home.
And if that requires you destroying everything before you?
His chest felt warm.
Max knew the answer, and no matter how much he hated it, he could no longer deny the truth behind it.
To get back to Tanila… I will do anything.

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"So now I showed off too much?"
Kauakan's expression was hard to read, his exoskeleton not changing at all, yet the pair of eyes and how the eyelids moved were the only clue that he was nervous.
"You have made it difficult for me to convince one of the others to put their champion against you. Those two, while not strong, have survived in this place because of their teamwork. What you did…"
The insect's hooked claws rubbed against each other behind his back.
"There is no doubt by how you toyed with them that this is not the place for you."
"What does that mean?" Aimee asked, once again trying to join in a conversation Kauakan had twice now tried to keep her out of. "You still owe us for the win, and we both know you will earn a lot by taking us to the next ring."
Angry chittering came from the leader's maw as he turned his attention toward the lizard woman standing next to Max.
"Tell me, what have you given him that prevents me from striking you dead right now."

Max stood there silently, watching the exchange.
To her credit, Aimee moved a step closer toward the towering insect and never flinched.
“If you feel that doing so wouldn’t result in your body experiencing far worse than those two did, I’m right here. I won’t even fight back.”
She held her arms out and stood like a tree that was about to be assaulted by a storm.
A chuckle came, and Kauakan slowly brought a bladed hand from behind his back and held it a few inches from Aimee’s face.
His eyes, however, never left Max’s gaze.
With his hood down and the knowledge a *smooth skin* was the newest fighter signed to his house, Kauakan understood the game he was playing.
“You are not worth the trouble, yet I will honor our bargain.”
The insect turned and moved to where the door was, stopping just before pushing it open.
“About a minute after I leave, they will summon you. When you defeat this next one, we shall all find ourselves standing somewhere new tomorrow.”
Glancing over his shoulder, Kauakan met Max’s gaze once more.
“From that moment on, you shall see what a real fighter is capable of.”
Ducking, he pushed on the door, opening it and shutting it behind him.
Max felt Aimee falter a step when the door closed and was about to say something until she held a hand up, taking a breath as a shiver ran through her.
The moment it passed, her facial muscles made her scales almost ripple like waves as she seemed to glare at him.
“Put the hood on and toy with this next one. You cannot make it look too easy, or we will never get the tokens we need.”
“How much money… I mean tokens do I have to earn?”
Reaching into a pocket of her robe, Aimee pulled out the purse and emptied it in her hand.
Max saw the three red tokens and the two green tokens. Each token was worth ten of the next until they reached the white tokens and some other one she never even bothered talking about.
“I have enough for a few weeks’ worth of room and board. I’m not sure if or when Romandis might pay you something for what you did, but we would survive only a single day on this amount in the next part of town. Prices go up, but so does the amount one can earn.”
She tucked the tokens back into her pouch and put it away.
“You realize we will need at least fifty juanguels before I can buy a power stone?”
Max nodded, knowing she was talking about the yellow ones, which were worth ten of the green ones each.
“If we want to make more, you need to make these fights closer. If you don't, finding an opponent will become harder, and the payout will be far less as everyone bets on you. When that happens…”
“The house doesn’t win, and we lose money.”
“Yes… money… that word… it feels so weird in my head. Now then, are you sure you are okay? You seem… different.”
“I’m fine. A part of me just realized how many I am going to have to… kill. I will be fine with that.”
A cackle of excitement came from his companion as she started to dance a little.
“Yes! You are learning! We take what we want!”
Forcing a smile, Max nodded, moving back to his chair, and sat down, pulling the hood over his face once more as he retrieved his staff that rested against the wall.
Less than ten seconds later, a banging on the door came, and he let out a groan.
As the door opened, a moth that Max recognized as Kauakan’s attendant poked its head in.
“It’s time.”
***

The very sand of the arena shook, and Max was amazed at how many had crammed themselves into the watching area of the space.
No empty space was available, and at least five hundred or more were now present, yelling and cheering as the crowd prepared for this matchup.
A dozen stones, each one about twelve inches squared were scattered around the combat area, and Max saw that his opponent had stone daggers set in a sheath like the woman Kaurma from Aimee's village had.
His opponent was a snake person, and he hadn't caught the name or how it really sounded when his companion had cursed, spitting on the floor upon seeing who he would fight.
She is dangerous... far more dangerous than Kaurma was .
Those words of Aimee's made him a little more cautious as the memory of the gorgon came to his mind.
"Tonight we have a champion we have not seen in a while! Lukahass has returned! The famed Stone Master has come to grind our newest fighter into gravel!"
Ignoring the cheers and shouts, Max studied his opponent.
Lukahass had black scales that were noticeably thicker than Aimee's or any of the other scaled beings he had seen. They glistened slightly, her body accented by a thick red line of scales that ran down her back. She had to be at least twenty feet long, but she was coiled and standing only about eight feet right now.
Long scaled arms with sharp claws twitched at her side as she stared at him with her blood-red eyes.
If it wasn't for the death gaze she gave him, Max could see how some might find her very attractive. Her face was simply scaled but looked like any other person. Even the two fangs that protruded from her top lip seemed to go well with the full black lips on her face.
"Two minutes are left! Place all bets!"
The announcer's words only seemed to encourage the frenzy of noise as spectators pushed and shoved against each other, all clambering to wager upon who they believed would live.
"It's a shame you're going to die," Lukahass hissed at him. "Do not think I will hesitate to kill you."
Max nodded, not replying, and still had his hood pulled over his head.
You realize what she might grant us?
The hunger inside him had been growing since the moment Max found out his opponent had an ability he didn't.
I do... the real question is how much can we play with her without putting ourselves at risk?
A chuckle came, and Max already knew the question that was about to come.
You could let me toy with her. While part of me wants to watch you give in, the other part of me can still sense the hesitation inside. I can be as kind as you desire or make it so that none ever challenge us again.
No... I need to do this. If I keep letting you handle this... these kinds of things, I may not be able to do what I know is coming. And if you are gone like you were for the last seven days, then what?
You have grown in many ways in a week. Fine. I shall say nothing. She is all yours.
Neither said a word as they waited.
When the drums began to sound, Max felt that his heart was calm.
Tanila... forgive me, but I do this to come back to you.
As the bells chimed, movement came from around the arena as each stone block rushed as one, each at a different height, aiming for a different area of his body.
Moving to one side, Max spun his staff, trying to dodge what he could, impressed at how fast these stone weapons moved.
Shattering one caused it to splinter, and Max saw the error of his decision as the broken pieces simply came at him as a barrage of stone chunks.

Cursing to himself, he summoned a wall of air behind him, ignoring the sounds of the stones that crashed into it, sensing more shards now filling the arena.
The crowd cheered as Max held up his arms, suffering the barrage of stone and pieces that tore through his robes, multiple pieces piercing his skin.
Just how strong are these things that they can cut my body?
He had thought laughter had come from Lukahass when the blocks shattered, and soon the sounds of the ones he had dodged slamming into each other, creating a cloud of dust and more weapons for his opponent to use against him.
Max started casting a fireball, not making it near as powerful as he could, and did his best, dodging and weaving as he tried to close in on his opponent, watching her slither around, putting her stone pieces between him and her, a whirlwind of sharp stone pieces flying all around him.
Closing his eyes, and glad the hood was still hiding his face, Max trusted his skill, wanting to protect his vision from the dust and tiny pieces that pelted him nonstop.
More of his robe was torn, and red splotches appeared on the dark material as well as the sand beneath his feet.
The flames of his spell sped toward the woman, and she changed the path of her deadly tornado, the pieces moving so quickly and forming a wall which dispersed the flames.
Even the air of her movements pushed them upward and away from her body.
Lukahass didn't miss a beat. The moment his spell was blocked and the flames were no longer a problem, she resumed her attack, the patchwork wall splitting into pieces and coming for every square inch of his body.
[Regeneration]
Max felt the pain of all the pieces that were lodged into his skin and muscle and knew that he had to endure more, yet for the first time since coming here, he realized just how dangerous a fighter she might be.
If she is only strong enough for this section, how powerful are the others deeper in the city?
A barrage of stone assaulted him, turning his cloak to tatters, and as the fabric was destroyed, the crowd started to notice what was underneath it.
Max could sense a change in their shouts. No longer was it simply a crowd wanting to witness a good death.
They called for him to be killed.
He could sense a change in Lukahass as she realized what he was.
She had been toying with him as he had been wanting to toy with her, and the stones that had been assaulting him came with twice the force as they had before, no longer simply burying a half inch into his flesh—now they pelted him and ripped off chunks, shearing skin and muscle, and a few larger pieces almost fractured a bone.
His joints were targeted, and his staff was a blur once more, attempting to destroy the larger pieces, willing to accept the smaller ones, which acted like sandpaper, stripping away his body.
The gray cloud of dust had become red, each stone now painted with his blood, and Max sensed the daggers in her sheaths coming free.
Each one was sharp, honed to a point, and Max's Sonar skill warned him that unlike the other pieces, these would cut much deeper.
A wall of ice appeared before him as he began casting Ice Nova, a small reprieve from the assault that had begun the moment the first bell chimed.
It only took a second for the spell he was casting to go off, not wanting to potentially hit the spectators who were closest to the stone walls, almost falling over it as they called out for his death.
A wave of cold radiated from around him, and even though Lukahass tried to run away from it and summon her wall to stop it, the power caught part of her tail, and Max remembered how much snakes hated the cold.
Moving faster than he had been, he raced toward her in a few steps, his bloodied body slamming through the wall of stone she erected, swinging his staff at her.

Both arms came up, attempting to block the attack, and the sound of bones shattering filled his ears, followed by her scream of pain.
Max gave a grunt as four pieces of stone struck him from behind. The six daggers she had sent had returned, and while he knew dodging or preventing all but one from hitting was possible, he needed to sell a lie.
The two that hit his legs did nothing, unable to puncture the armor he wore. One buried itself in his lower back, while another struck the joint of his shoulder.
It hurt, yet Max knew what he had to do, and this next part couldn't be a show of any great spell. Already he had shown another trick by revealing his ice magic, but it had been planned.
Not slowing down, Max plowed into Lukahass, letting his staff fall to the ground as he wrapped both arms around her torso.
She flailed in his arms, her tail starting to wrap and constrict around his torso and legs.
Unsure how much power was required, Max started to squeeze, listening and waiting until a snap came and the coils began to unwind.
The two daggers were driving deeper into his body, sliding through his flesh, fighting against the power of his Regeneration skill.
Letting go, Max sat up, now straddling the woman, and began to pound her face with his fists.
As each blow struck, the crowd became quieter, seeing the battle shifting from their desired outcome to a new one.
One last fist connected, the crunch of a cheek bone gone, and Max stopped his assault.
Blood covered the sand, and he gazed down at the body beneath him.
Pulling the stone dagger that was lodged in his shoulder, Max gave a grunt, creating another geyser of his life force, tossing the weapon to the side.
Lukahass's breath was ragged, her face beaten and bloodied. One eye was gone, and both arms were broken in multiple places. Her beautiful lips and both fangs had vanished, turned into a paste.
"You did well," Max said as he pulled his fist back, his gaze fixed on the last eye that stared up at him.
A shockwave moved through the sand as his fist obliterated her head.
Once more the stadium went quiet before erupting with a cheer that felt hollow.
What Max cared about was what appeared in his vision.
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Stone Mastery]?]
[Yes / No]

21 Chapter 295

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1935580/chapter-295 2024-12-03;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/99657/dark-matter-ascension-dec-2nd-launch]

A guttural cry came from the stands where the praying mantis was in its box, bladed arms waving through the air as it said something Max couldn't understand.
Even through the shouting and cheers of the crowd, it was evident that this champion had been its, and based on the smiles of the other three arena bosses, Max had just crippled that side's pool of fighters.

“Your new champion! Ifrit!”
The announcer's shout once more brought the crowd to a frenzy, chanting his name as he climbed up off the corpse beneath him.
Retrieving his staff, he turned and moved toward the glass gate, not bothering to give them a show.
You did that in a very subtle way. I had rather hoped you might have made her suffer more, yet tell me Max, how does it feel to end a life with your bare hands?
The question wasn’t a dig or any kind of attempt to lure him down some dark path. Max could sense his skill probing, testing him. Wondering if he could answer that truthfully.
I did what I must, and you know it. There was no joy in it.
Beyond the skill we both hoped to acquire?
Waiting for the gate to rise, Max grunted, knowing that he had wanted this skill. Inside him, the hunger had grown.
A part of him had been sad that he gained nothing from the twin cat warriors he had slain.
Max had chalked that up on them being too far beneath him or not having anything that was worthy of his skill. He still wasn’t sure how it worked exactly, and now wasn’t the time to pester it again with when and why he sometimes got none, one, or multiple skills.
I need to get stronger. Those skills help me get stronger. If I can master what she did, learn how to control stone like that and incorporate it into my attacks, it will make us harder to stop.
No reply came, and Max walked into the glass tunnel, leaving the chaos of the arena behind.
***
“For a moment I wondered if you had bitten off more than you could chew,” Kauakan stated as one of his attendants handed a pouch to Aimee. “That fight went almost exactly as I had hoped.”
“You wanted a different ending?”
The insect shook his head, and a weird chuckle came from him.
“No… I would have eaten her while she was alive. You do not strike me as one who would do that. Still, I have lost a few fighters against Lukahass in the past. Removing her has been a boon for myself and the other two.”
He clicked a few times, and the attendant nodded, pulling out a piece of paper and a glowing stone.
Max noticed Aimee’s eye twitch just for a moment as the moth handed her both.
“You can enter the next part of the city. In a few days, I will find you, and we shall discuss the coming fights.”
Once again, the insect rubbed his claws together, almost as if it gave him pleasure, or perhaps it was an uncontrollable action.
“Find you a new outfit, and be prepared for those who might seek you. Word is spreading about a new smooth skin.”
As Kauakan turned to leave, Max held up his hand.
“Why do your kind hate my kind so much?”
A few moments passed, and nothing was said as Kauakan stared at Max.
“It is not just your kind. There are others who have come to our world. Specials, beings, monsters, and all of them have come here for one thing. Power.”
He pointed at Aimee with a claw and grunted.
“Your servant, slave, play toy, or whatever she is can tell you more. I have business to take care of. Today we made a lot, and I plan on leaving this section of the city if you are as strong as you seem.”
Moving slowly, Kauakan came to stand just a few feet from Max, looking down upon him.

“Do not doubt I am not your friend. You choose me as an end to a means. I am supporting you as a means to my end. If you fail too soon, I will be forced to return here, and believe me when I say, I would prefer that not to happen.”
***
Max was grateful for another robe, even though it smelled worse than the first. At least he could hide himself completely under the larger size Aimee had acquired him.
“He is right,” she muttered as they moved down the streets quickly, scanning everyone that came toward them or were moving behind them. “We need to be careful. Are you certain it is worth returning to this weapon smith you barely know?”
Max stopped, forcing her to back up a few steps to come and stand where he had not moved from.
“Did I not keep my promise to you? Why would I go back on my word to Romandis? Is not the weapon I hold in my hands proof the exchange was worthy of this?”
Grunting, she nodded quickly and glanced around Max for a moment.
“Yes! Now is not the place or time to talk about this, though! We are in the open, and I’m certain someone is following us!”
“Four are following us,” Max replied. “Two are on the rooftops, flying when the streets come across. Another two are on my right, stopped near a set of stairs pretending to be chatting with each other.”
He watched as her eyes tracked the rooftops, seeing them widen upon spotting one that he had pointed out.
“How? How can you do that without even turning around?”
“You have your secrets, and I have mine. For now, I need to see Romandis and talk about something.”
Grunting once more, she nodded, and the pair set off.
***
“You want me to leave? To come to the next part of the city?”
Max nodded, not sure who was more surprised at his question.
Aimee was almost seething, shifting from side to side behind him.
“You don’t understand how much something like that costs… a shop there… I… I don’t think I could even hope to secure a place. Besides, all my equipment is here.”
“But if you could, would you join me? I want to learn more about your crafting, and I promised to teach you. I cannot keep that promise if you are here, as I’m not certain how often I would be able to return to this place.”
“Rarely,” Aimee chimed in. “It is not good to move backward through the rings. That is why…” She paused and then sighed as she shook her head.” That is why Kauakan told you what he did.”
“Wait! You’re a fighter?”
“Have you not heard about what he did today in the arena?”
Romandis shook his head at Aimee and pointed to the items behind him.
“I have been working, trying to use some of the knowledge Max shared with me. What did I miss?”
“He killed Lukahass.”
The smith’s two yellow eyes were almost as large as the moon, his jaw unable to stay closed. Almost as if by instinct, the man backed up until he banged into a table.
“You… you killed her?”
“I did. Now tell me, will you join me? When will you get paid for the weapon we made together?”
“Tomorrow. It… it will be a lot but… the cost of setting up a shop there… of acquiring a new place… even then—”
“Do not worry,” Max replied, cutting him off as he turned to look at Aimee. “Can you leave a message at the gate that he is to be allowed to join us?”
“Yesssss… It will cost something, and you will be responsible for him.”
“That will work. Now Romandis,” Max said as he moved to where the kemonomimi was still leaning against the table. Putting a hand on the cat’s shoulder he grinned. “You will take all that money and any other that you have, and every time I fight, you will bet it all on me. Do you understand?”

“But… if you lose…”
“I won’t. Surely after two fights you should be able to afford a new place, and I can help you become a weaponsmith that many will visit. Perhaps in time you can hire a few others to work under you.”
A snort came from behind, and Max ignored his companion, watching the whiskers and fur of the man before him dance.
“I… why? I have nothing to offer you anymore,” Romandis replied, motioning to the room around him. “You already have a weapon far greater than any I have ever seen. You gave me a weapon that will provide renown and tokens to let me be comfortable here for quite some time. What do you gain by helping me?”
A thread in Max’s chest was tight. Even though he knew everything here required him to be brutal, a part of him wouldn’t snap.
“I balance the scales, and you are my balance,” he replied. “While I must sometimes be brutal, the gods have placed you in my path, and we share a kindred spirit. As such, I shall endeavor to use those moments to impart some good.”
Romandis’s head moved up and down slowly. Through their contact, Max could feel some of the tension releasing in the smith’s shoulders.
“Then I shall do what I can to join you quickly. If you believe your gods have brought us together, I will trust that mine has as well.”
Smiling, Max gave a squeeze and moved back to where Aimee was fidgeting.
“Then I wish you the best until we meet again. Shall we?”
Aimee cracked her neck before nodding, her nostrils flaring as they had so often lately.
***
You sure you want to sleep like that?”
Max nodded, ignoring the repeated attempts to have him join her in the bed. Sitting cross-legged, he rested against the walls in the corner of the room.
“I need to meditate. It has been far too long, and I can feel it affecting me. With these fights getting harder I need to do this more often.”
A grunt came, and Max sensed her rolling over, huffing the entire time.
You appear to be caught in a dangerous trap. She is trying to keep her claws in you and does not want to share you with others. Are you certain you want to keep company with her?
It’s her culture… her world. Like that smith, no one shows kindness. Part of me wonders if parents even show kindness to their children. I still haven’t seen a child in all my days inside the city walls.
Not every world celebrates children or loves them like you believe they should. Pieces on a puzzle, stones to climb upon, or worse, food for when things are hard. That is what many view all life, including their own. Do not some animals eat their young?
Having been hoping to actually rest, Max found himself in a philosophical debate that was not part of his plan.
Forget that I asked. I made a promise to her. Once I get her enough tokens to acquire the power this world requires, we can let her go.
Laughter came, and Max sensed the reason why.
Those claws of hers will not let you go so easily.
Ignoring his skill and the truth in those words, Max instead slowed down his breathing, trying to forget about the woman on the other side of the room who was jealous of sharing him with anyone else.
Instead all he could think about was Tanila.
He tried to think about the way she smelled. The scent of her hair was so subtle, yet he had many times put his face into her pillow, breathing deep, each time smiling when done.
She had teased him over and over about that, asking why he did it, and the answer never changed.
Because I love everything about you.

The next day she had switched pillows with him. Every few days she would repeat the process, and he had never slept better.
Lemon and... a grass... some kind of grass...
It was there… his mind connected the memory, and his nose twitched, reacting as if the room had just been filled with that scent.
Smiling, Max let himself fall asleep, his skin against the cool glass walls, dreaming of the woman he loved.

22 Chapter 296

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1937504/chapter-296 2024-12-04;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/99554/the-mechanical-mage-a-run-em-over-litrpg]

“You may enter.”
Max nodded, still keeping his head covered, having finally gotten a shirt that fit and a robe that didn’t itch as much.
The guards moved without waiting, having seen the glowing stone, and glanced over the paper.
As they moved through the gate, fewer people were around than in the previous section, and the entrance was slightly nicer than the last.
Instead of glass doors, two large stone gates were here, one open all the way, allowing them entrance into this part of city.
Buildings began to appear as they moved through the tunnel, and Max saw a variety of different colored glass structures, as well as the rare stone one.
“The roads… they look like individual glass bricks.”
Aimee shook her head after she bent down quickly and inspected one.
“No, those are just etched that way. My mother didn’t share much beyond this area of the city. Whatever comes next, if we are able to reach it, will be new to both of us.”
There were beastkins and insects that still pulled carts, except almost everyone Max saw was in much better shape than before. Those who were not doing manual labor wore colored clothes that appeared to be softer and better woven.
Occasionally a statue or some other object could be found attached to a property, some acting as a sign to say what was inside. A pair of stone snakes entwined around a stone pole represented a healer or a potion maker.
“Here is where we can look for something to protect your chest, arms and head,” Aimee said as she pointed at a building a hundred feet ahead on their left.
Outside were two stone statues, one a tall, faceless design with carved armor and the other a smaller matching one that wore what looked like chain armor of some kind.
“Who crafts these statues?”
“Someone not just skilled in Stone Mastery but who has an artist ability as well. Those who can manipulate stone, like Lukahass could, have many paths they can travel. She had another skill, one combat based, and that allowed her to do what she did. All Stone Masters can move stone like that, but not all of them have that level of control or finesse.”
Aime pointed at the building further ahead on the right.

“That house costs far more than the others because the stone is much harder to come by. There is a quarry around here, I’m not certain where, and it requires a lot of work to move the stones. I’m not sure how, but the Stone Master can fuse the stones together just like a Sand Master can.”
Motioning with her hand as she walked, Aimee pointed at the road and buildings made of glass. “I still don’t understand how all this works. As someone with no skill or power, I just know what everyone knows. If we can get me a skill that does something like that, then I’ll be able to share what I learn.”
Max reached out and stopped her, knowing no one was close enough to hear what he was about to say.
“What kind of power are you hoping for?”
She was frowning, and Max could finally detect that by how her top lips pressed down further on her jaw. Even the back part of her skin on both eyes became tight, and while he wasn’t sure if everyone knew these subtle things, it was finally helping him to read his companion better.
“That is a… personal question…” she replied slowly. “I… I always dreamed of being a glass warrior, but after watching Lukahass, I see Stone Mastery is both strong and weak.”
“No stone means you can’t do as much.”
Aimee bobbed her head, and Max saw her jaw change to the slight smirk or smile she sometimes gave without showing teeth.
“A Sand Master in the wild is dangerous because they will never run out of things to use. You might have thought Lukahass and her sponsor cheated in some ways, having the stone blocks waiting in there, but without them she would have been only able to use the few weapons on her.”
“There is an Earth Master but those are so rare that anyone who acquires that skill ends up working for Igarra at some point. They are not allowed to fight because the need for them is so great and only a fool would challenge one, knowing the consequences for doing so.”
She held up all eight of her fingers and wiggled them.
“You have stone, sand, earth, fire, water, air, wood, and lightning. Those masteries are varied with the elemental ones”—she paused, glancing around before continuing —“like the fire and water you showed are very rare. I will say I have never seen or heard of someone making what you called *ice* from water before. Usually they carry around a pack of water and once again are protected because of the need to keep the underground wells flowing to the fields and city.”
“I’m assuming Fire Mastery is used for crafting?”
Her smile grew larger, teeth showing now.
“The fact you are fighting with fire and water will have gained Igarra’s attention already. Add in the fact you are a smooth skin, and I have no doubt, a time will come when she will send for you.”
“Right now she’s waiting to see how strong I am.”
“Max,” Aime said as she slapped his arm, “you are smarter than most. Yes. When she sends for you, the real question will be if it’s an order or a request. I mean, it will be an order, regardless, but how it is worded will be determined.”
Together they moved toward the armor shop, and Max wondered how long it might be before the ruler of this city summoned him.
As long as the hunter stays away and I can find some way to get stronger, I will gladly do what I can to acquire more power.
***
“Welcome, Ifrit!”
Max stopped in the entrance, the metal door open, and a tall mantis waving both bladed arms in the air. Behind it were a few different beastkin who looked up from the work they were doing, eyes all fixed on him.
Blue light filled the room from the stone set inside the glass walls, and a few different sets of premade leather armor of some kind were stacked on a table to the left, in three different-sized piles.

“Uh… how did you—”
“Forgive me!” exclaimed the insect as it bent over some. “Word travels fast, and the moment you two came to the gate, it has been like a sandstorm, blowing through every corner and will soon fill this part of the city and surely the next!”
Aimee nodded, and Max tried not to sigh as he followed her to the counter the owner of the shop was standing behind.
“I am Oohaema! Tell me, what can I do for you?”
Knowing the robe wasn’t needed any longer, Max removed it and ignored the gasps from the back of the shop.
“I could use some leather armor to protect me across my chest and arms. I would also like something around my neck.”
The gold eyes shimmered in the light as Oohaema’s head shifted every direction.
“That is… an interesting set of clothes. Are they infused?”
“Don’t worry about them,” Aimee chimed in. “Can you make us something quickly that will fit him, or should I find another shop that can earn a reputation for protecting the newest champion of the outer ring?”
Clacking noise came as the mantis bent toward Aimee, and Max could feel an aura of something coming off it.
“I would be… honored to say that my shop provided the equipment that protects Ifrit. Tell me, are you as shrewd as they say?”
Scoffing, Aimee grunted and pointed a finger in Max’s direction, never taking her eyes off of the armorer.
“If your equipment keeps him safe, then I will sing praises to everyone about how you made it. However… if they do not protect him, then I will do just the opposite.”
A few glass chairs scraped across the glass floor, and Max watched as the pair continued to stare at each other.
Suddenly each began saying something in a language that once again didn’t translate, but Max knew what they were doing.
After some loud back and forth, the pair bumped fist to back of bladed arm.
“Tomorrow, I shall have it.”
“Don’t you need to measure me?” Max asked.
Oohaema turned to Max, and a chuckling sound came from the insect.
It raised a bladed arm to its head and tapped near its large eye.
“No. I already know exactly what to do. You will be a fun one to craft for. Now, what about something to protect your head?”
Running his fingers through his hair, still learning to get used to the sensation after so long without any, Max shook his head.
“Maybe one day, but for now I would prefer not to.”
“Very well. Tomorrow morning, three hours after the suns are up, come by, and I will have what you need.”
Aimee turned and moved toward the door, leaving Max to awkwardly wave and follow behind her.
As he left, Oohaema was speaking in that weird language of his, and Max sensed the workers behind setting aside their current projects and beginning to move elsewhere.
***
“It would appear you are doing well already,” Aimee stated as she sat in a wooden chair across from Kauakan. “Not even a few days after our victory, and you have a place four streets in.”
A nod came from their promoter, and he looked up from some papers one of his moth attendants had before him on a desk.
“There is still much to do, and we only have three days before his first fight. Tell me, do you need anything?”
“I am—”
“We are fine for now,” Aimee said, cutting Max off, her lowered eyelid telling him she didn’t like when he took over the discussion about stuff and tokens. “The rooms you provided are adequate, and we have procured armor already. For now, I think we should be fine.”

Kauakan fixed his gaze upon Max for a few seconds and then shook his head.
“Do you have anything to request?”
Ignoring Aimee’s glare, Max nodded.
“I have a weapon smith who I am bringing with me. Eventually, I want to help him get a place to set up shop and would appreciate it if you could help find a place that might work.”
“You’re bringing a weapon smith? Why…”
His question stopped as Max intentionally twisted the staff in his right hand.
“I can look into this. You do realize that space here is not cheap. I won’t get into numbers, but I have bet everything I have on you. Just leasing this place is draining everything I have saved.”
“And we are certain you shall make ten times or more,” Aimee stated as she shifted the conversation back to her.
Kauakan’s laughter came as the insect looked at the lizard woman to the left of Max.
“Someday…” Sighing, he conveyed instructions to his attendant, and the moth collected the papers from the desk. “For now the second floor is yours. Only the second floor.”
His tone had shifted, and Max was now curious but didn’t ask.
“You can bring your friend and put them there, as there are four rooms on that floor. Just remember, do not stray to the other floors. While this relationship is one I hope lasts for some time, that road is long, and you have barely taken the first few steps of earning my trust.”
Standing, Max nodded, surprised when Aimee was still seated.
“You can go upstairs. I need to talk with our host about a few more things,” she stated.
He sensed Kauakan tense but said nothing.
Making his way to the stairs, Max was ready to relax and spend a little time testing his new skills.

23 Chapter 297

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1939321/chapter-297 2024-12-05;

[Skill Description - Stone Mastery]
*****
Stone Mastery - Rare Skill: The user has the ability to control a variety of stones. Use may change its structure or keep its original form. There is no limit to the size or shape of what one may design. As long as stone is available and the user has mana, they can construct walls and even buildings. Weapons may also be created and controlled.
*****
The description was so similar to the Sand Mastery one.
“And it was only rare… What other skill could have modified it so much?”
He had replayed that fight over and over, and Max could only conclude that either Kaurma had not expected him to be a real threat and had not used her full power, or something else modified the skill.
Before him sat a pouch of small stones that he had asked for after the fight.
A trophy .
Kauakan had laughed but made certain to retrieve a stone dagger and the small pouch before him.
Another pouch sat next to it, this one filled with the brown sand he had almost gone crazy running across.
With a room to himself, he could finally practice in secret.

Like his Sonar, which was always there, Max had to turn off the Sand and Stone Mastery skills, or he was constantly bombarded with the knowledge of every ounce and speck of sand within twenty yards. The same was for the stone that he carried and the buildings he moved past.
It had been interesting to turn it off and on occasionally, noticing that someone moved through the city daily, removing sand that was brought in via wagon or by those who had been in it.
In this ring of the city, none had been present when he came inside.
Drawing upon the magic, he made the fist-size collection of sand float into the air, watching as he made it dance. Shapes and patterns were easy to create, and an idea popped into his head.
Slowly he started to draw Tanila's face, only to realize immediately he would need a lot more sand to make it work.
Fighting the desire to sigh, Max instead tested how fast he could send the sand in its current form, and used it to attempt to ensnare his fingers, finding that he was either physically too strong to bind his fist in the ball he created or that somehow his own spell wouldn't truly restrict him like that.
After a solid hour of playing with the sand in its tiny form, Max made the next jump.
In his mind he could see what he wanted. A small dagger made of glass.
The process was like a combination between crafting and just willing it to take shape.
He considered the dagger that Kaurma had on her, the black glass, and wondered if there was a reason for why it looked that way.
Summoning a ball of fire, Max started to let his mind run with it, letting his crafting skill take a part in it as well.
Time passed as the glass heated up, a bright red, orange, and white ball of floating sand. Part of him felt like he was doing it wrong, the Sand Mastery skill having said he could just fuse the pieces together, force them to change, yet this felt right by his Weapon Crafting skill.
When it seemed right, Max took the melted sand and shaped it into a small dagger.
The blade was only about four inches, and the handle would barely fit in his hand, but it wasn't crude like the other blades Kaurma used.
Forcing the sand now turned glass upon itself, Max started to struggle with holding the shape, realizing that what he now had was losing its original state. Each moment it became less sand and was becoming more glass.
Quickly, he drew out the stones, forcing them to bind together and make a mold of what he wanted, surprised at how fast they fused together, creating the exact shape in his head.
Before the molten glass fell to the floor, a stone cast was made, and Max let the glass fill it, shaking and pressing the stone together, removing air bubbles, and when the mold was filled, he forced the stone to close the spot, pushing out the remaining melted glass.
It began to spill on the floor, and, unable to do anything about it, Max watched as it struck the black glass floor, beading up and bouncing a little bit.
"Well, at least I know it won't join or stick to the floor."
Reaching out, Max grabbed the stone that he had floating in the air, feeling the heat that came from the item inside.
As he prepared to set the stone on the floor, he let out a curse.
"Elf tits."
Then the thought of a certain pair of elf tits appeared in his head, and Max smiled.
He created a ball of fire and set the stone mold near it, trying to gauge the heat.
"I'm going to have to watch this for hours…"
Knowing that if the glass cooled too fast it would crack and shatter, Max leaned against the wall and began to play with the stone dagger.
"At least I can practice with this for a bit."
***
About seven hours later, Max felt he could finally let the fireball fade, gently touching the stone mold and sensing the heat of it. He had turned it repeatedly over all this

time, trying to make sure the temperature was even. Now he felt he could let it just cool on its own and closed his eyes, smiling as he dreamed about elf tits once more.
***
“Three hundred and fifty steps. How deep are we?”
Aimee didn’t reply, her eyes focused on the spectacle before them.
Max was more interested in this arena, built under the city ring. Giant light gems cast their glow, and a packed crowd of at least two thousand roared and cheered as four fighters fought to be the last one standing.
Even though the people gathered here were supposed to be stronger, richer, and a *better* class of beings, they shouted and cried out just like those at the last arena.
Studying the box sections, Max saw that eight of the nine had people in them.
The arena floor was fifty yards in diameter, a much larger section than last time, and right now the fight taking place was using every inch of it.
All four had weapons, or two of the four had weapons—the other two were weapons.
One was an insect like Kauakan, and for a moment two of the fighters had ganged up on it, forced to stop that attempt when the fourth, a mantis fighter, attempted to attack one of the pair from behind.
Soon the chaos of one against one would change to two against one if the pair got too close.
When things got bad, the smarter one on the losing side would lure their opponent close to the other pair, changing the dynamic of the fight, as no one thought twice about taking a swipe at a potentially open opponent.
He could sense Aimee was shaking with excitement as her hands clenched the glass bars of their small window, watching the battle before her.
She and Romandis had both bet everything they had on his fight that was only two matches away.
At least you know who your opponent will be. Of course it makes more sense, giving people more time to bet and allowing the bookies to adjust the percentages based on how they think the fight will go.
His companion had not been happy to hear that his first match was only 2:1 odds.
Had he not been a *smooth skin* , then the odds would have been in their favor she had informed him multiple times.
“You should be watching this,” Aimee said again. “You could learn something.”
Moving to the built-in seat of the glass wall, Max ignored her attempt.
“I can tell you who is going to win unless the three of them change their tactics soon,” Max stated. “If they don’t gang up on the mantis warrior, it will take apart the last two.”
She glanced at him, and Max smiled.
“You’re certain?”
Nodding, he closed his eyes.
“Watch the speed of the attacks and parries. When a real strike comes that should connect, the mantis moves just fast enough to make the attack almost hit him. There is a speed and strength difference, but the others haven’t appeared to notice yet.
“The creature like Kauakan is the weakest link, which is why the mantis saved him. Right now the others do not realize that the mantis is learning their patterns and moves. If I’m right, in about thirty seconds, maybe a minute, it will make its move, and the fight will end pretty quickly after that.”
Aimee turned back to watch the fight, and a roar came from the crowd when the mantis did exactly what Max had just predicted.
It parried a strike from the tigerkin that used a sword and shield, its arm blade forcing the weapon and the creature down, its other bladed arm moving faster than its opponent had anticipated.
Bouncing across the sandy floor, the yellow furry head landed on its side, blood seeping from the wound as the body fell.
When the crowd cheered, the other two had taken a step back, seeing what had just happened and gave a slight head nod to each other.

A chittering noise was drowned out by the crowd as the pair moved to engage the mantis, but neither were prepared for what came next.
Gasping, Aimee watched as the other insect died in seconds, both arms severed in a combo attack before its head was also freed from its body.
When the bearkin attempted to get close, its charge left it open, and the large axe it wielded was too heavy to move in time.
A full-length gash appeared along its left side, cut from shoulder to thigh.
It stumbled, dropping its weapon before a pair of bladed arms pierced its back, extending out its chest and the leather armor it wore.
With a quick movement of its arms, blood was sent flying, and the crowd roared with approval as the mantis waved its weapons in the air.
“And we have a winner! Ompahaea has sliced her way to the top!”
“It's a girl… how does one ever know that?”
“By their size and color. Are you a complete idiot?”
Max ignored Aimee’s taunt and closed his eyes, preparing inside for what he knew was about to come.
***
“Today is a special day!”
Max ignored the announcer as he stood on the field, watching the three who all were glaring at him with malice.
“We have another four-way battle, but today you will be the first to see Ifrit fight in our city ring!”
Cheers, boos, and just general chaos came from the crowd as the announcer continued their call for noise.
Standing in a square, Max saw the other three he would face and felt like someone must be really trying to test him.
Across from him, another mantis warrior was present, this one taller and apparently a woman, from what Aimee had said. She had a history of eating the heads of her vanquished opponents.
To his right was an armored beast of some kind. It was short, maybe five feet if it was lucky, but its back, arms, and legs were covered in spikes that dripped some sort of liquid. Beady red eyes glared at him, and yet Max almost chuckled as the tiny mouth with two buck teeth showing twitched slightly.
On his left was the mystery opponent. They were clad in chain armor, carried a spear that was eleven feet long, and had a few other weapons attached to their back and sides. Small pieces of fur poked through the armor and clawed hands held the shaft of its weapon.
Aimee said none knew whether it was a man or woman, but the report was Carhena was the most dangerous one out here. They never took off their armor and had obviously never lost.
“Who is ready to see someone die?!”
Thunderous roars shook the very foundation as each person watching seemed caught up in a frenzy, hungry for death.
“Well then! Let’s get the killing started!”
I thought he would never ask.
Max couldn’t help but laugh when his skill spoke, earning himself some questioning looks from his opponents.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/99884/rebirth-of-the-forgotten-king-reincarnation-progression]

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1941219/chapter-298 2024-12-06;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/92782/wayspring-wanderer-a-desert-druid-litrpg]

Chapter 298
As the bells chimed, Max moved toward the twenty-five foot walls.
None of the other three hesitated, each of them moving as a group, keeping him pinned in as he let himself get pinned against a wall.
Knowing what was going to happen, Max had his spell already building up, waiting for the moment to let it out.
The one on his right curled up into a ball, starting to spin as it moved, flicking sand and purple ooze from the spikes on its body.
Carhena waited, spear out, and let the mantis close in some, each now only about fifteen feet away as Max stood a few feet from the wall.
Someone above threw a glass mug at him from the stands, and Max moved his head, dodging the attack from behind.
A few seconds later, a beastkin found itself airborne, flying over the wall.
The crunch of bones as it hit was hidden by the laughter and cheers of the spectators.
A tigerkin found itself unable to move and trapped between Max and the other three, holding up its left arm, panic setting in on its face.
Tsking, Max unleashed a Fire Nova, and the second the flames washed out from him, Carhena thrust her spear into the ground, vaulting to lean against the walls and out of the fiery spell.
The mantis took to the air, wings appearing from behind, and it hovered safely above the pain that took out the spectator.
Max couldn’t help but grin as the smallest one attempted to spin away but wasn’t able to outrun the spell, flames washing over its body and causing it to spasm as it fell sideways before opening back up.
The second wave went out, and then the third, blackening the sand and taking out the smallest of the three opponents.
When the last wave had left, the mantis screeched and moved to his right, coming in from above with a double attack.
Carhena reacted instantly, coming down from the wall, shifting forward, the spear moving with a speed and grace that Max could appreciate.
Slowly Max moved from the wall, using his left hand to parry and block the spear, his right hand twirling his staff and deflecting the barrage of slashes from the mantis.
Each of them was fast, much faster than the previous opponents, and they fought with an uncanny ability to strike at the same time against Max.
Only his weapon skill and Sonar allowed him to know just where to step, when to turn or react.
Like a top they spun in the sand, Max at the center and the other two changing directions every few seconds.
The noise of the crowd was able to be felt it was so loud.
Max found himself smiling, enjoying the moment, holding his own against two opponents he could tell were probably at least able to fight in the tower floors at level thirty.
Minutes passed, and not once did the pair relent or give up their assault.
And then a bell sounded. It wasn’t loud, but Max heard it, his Sonar detecting the noise.

Carhena’s spear glowed blue, and the mantis’s blades flashed orange.
Surprised at the obvious coordination, Max prepared for what was about to come.
Both blades came, and Max used his staff, moving to parry them when the first one connected, forcing him backward as whatever skill the insect had used had increased the power of their attack.
As he shifted his left hand, ready to parry the spear, it vanished, and Max’s Sonar detected it only at the last second.
Twisting sideways, using the force from the second bladed arm that struck his staff, Max’s chest turned, taking the weapon to his left lung instead of his heart.
A chorus of joy and excitement came from the crowd as his blood was spilt.
The armor he wore that was hidden under the robe had done its job, slowing the tip just enough that it didn’t go out his back.
[Regeneration]
[Evasion]
As the spear was yanked free and was sent toward him again, two more slashing attacks came from the mantis.
His ability sensed the spear as it vanished, knew where it would be, and even with blood flowing down his chest, Max pushed the weapon to the side, watching as it tore through his robe but missed his body by an inch.
Two bladed arms struck at the same time, but with his skill activated, his staff held under their power, and Max threw back his hood, letting his face show completely.
[Ice Nova]
He had been preparing it, holding it, and now with both close, he let it out, watching as the magic struck them, even the one flying unable to escape its reach as he poured more mana into it.
Their movement slowed, and as Carhena tried to retract the spear, Max grabbed on to it, yanking as he twisted, pulling the warrior off their feet.
As they came toward him, Max let go, sliding his elbow along the shaft, watching as Carhena tried to get both arms up in time to block his strike.
It connected, sending the chained warrior flying backward about ten yards, rolling in the sand before they stood up.
The spear was still moving, flying in the direction Max had yanked on it, now free from the grasp of its owner.
Snatching it out of the air, he held it at the end of its eleven-foot shaft and twisted, hand tucked against his side that bled, whipping the weapon around.
Trying to fly out of the way, the insect couldn’t get away from the reach, the cracking sound of its exoskeleton breaking drowned out by the crowd as the mantis was sent tumbling through the arena floor, one wing now missing.
Spinning once more, Max’s staff twirled, blocking the daggers that were coming at him. Carhena, running, tossed another pair before grabbing a pair of swords from their waist.
With what felt like a lifetime of practice, even though it hadn’t even been a year, Max slid his hands down the spear shaft, summoned an ice wall, and ran up it, jumping upward and tossing the overly large weapon at the downed insect.
It flew like an arrow, hitting its mark, pinning the mantis through the chest and into the floor.
[Skill Consumed is Equal or Lesser to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
I guess we already knew that one .
Indeed.
Coming toward the ground, Max rolled and rose up, his staff blocking the two slashes that came as he stood.
His eyes snapped shut, sensing something like sand being flung at him, and as the substance connected with his skin, a burning sensation began, but it wasn’t overpowering.
This one is a tricky one.

Swords came again, slicing upward, downward, thrusting, and a barrage of attacks never stopped.
Even when his Evasion skill ended, Max couldn’t help but appreciate the effort this one was giving.
They reminded him of Dexic. Strong, fast, and not against using cheap tricks.
His wound was healed, and when Regeneration turned itself off, Max opened his eyes and smiled.
Carhena tried to disengage, seeing the look on Max’s face, but he didn’t give them that chance.
Instead, he became the attacker, his weapon moving between both hands as he thrust, slammed, kicked, and punched.
He had an idea of how strong this one was, and that chain armor did little against a bludgeoning weapon.
Instead, he slowly increased how hard he struck, grinning more when the first crack came and Carhena dropped the sword in their left hand.
Crack.
Crack.
Crack.
Each blow struck with surgical precision, making his opponent unable to hold a weapon, unable to raise an arm in defense.
Carhena’s ribs broke, and then he swept their legs, shattering both femurs the moment Carhena hit the arena floor.
The crowd was going crazy, watching an obvious favorite dismantled like this.
Moving to their head, Max grabbed the helmet and pulled it off.
“Don’t!”
Ignoring the plea, he saw what looked like a fox, with soft fur, big eyes, and a small snout filled with sharp teeth.
Some cries came from the audience, and Max ignored them.
“You fought well. Thank you for helping me get stronger.”
“Wait!”
The announcer's cry came, yet Max ignored it.
His staff came down, striking the chest and caving it in.
A surge of blood shot forth from the foxkin’s mouth, and Max felt what he longed for.
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Ghost Strike]?]
[Yes / No]
Tempted to hit yes, he waited, watching as someone from the box section of the stands came racing across the floor.
It was another foxkin, bigger, with reddish fur that matched the one beneath his feet.
Max saw the hate in those yellow eyes and could sense the difference in power.
This one was dressed in finer clothes. No armor was evident amongst the vibrant colors.
A shout came from their snout, and Max noticed two more leaping down into the arena floor.
“DO NOT FIGHT!”
Lowering himself, Max held his weapon ready, the distance gone in just two seconds.
His new opponent swung, weapons moving with a speed that felt like the first fight he had ignored. This one outmatched everything he had faced.
Max’s staff moved with the same haste, matching each strike, bringing up his leg to block kicks.
“DO NOT FIGHT! THE—”
Whatever the announcer was trying to convey, it was obvious that this one didn’t care.
Still, Max was glad that the other pair had stopped about ten yards away, staying close but not engaging yet, unsure why.
“Rhomadous, heel!”
The power of the command was incredible.

[Consume has Resisted Mental Command]
As if the foxkin had been crushed by a mountain, Max had to halt his natural instinct to brain in his foe when the beast flattened themself in the sand.
That awkward moment when there was no sound beyond the heavy breathing of the one lying before him made Max aware that the arena was silent.
The other pair that had held back were bent over, faces in the sand like the one he assumed was Rhomadous.
Glancing at the crowd, Max saw that every person was kneeling, and then he saw why.
Dropping from the wall, appearing from behind a curtain in one of the boxes, an unusually large lizard woman strode toward him.
Her scales glistened like the sun, and Max had no doubt this golden one coming toward him had to be Igarra.
The way she moved, each step graceful yet poised to react and bring death, almost made him itch.
That one… she is powerful. Can you feel the aura she gives off?
Wouldn't it be harder to not feel it?
Perhaps we should not attempt to play games with this one like the other.
As the ruler of this city came close, Max watched the very sand almost seem to move away from her feet.
She wore a simple gown, jewelry adorning her neck, fingers, wrists, and ankles.
Yet the powerful aura she had pressed against him like a weight, and when she came to stand about five feet away, he bent his neck upward to look at her.
Eight feet… she has to be eight feet tall.
"For one so small, you are causing much chaos lately, *Ifrit* . Why is it that each of you smooth skins always brings problems?"
"Forgive me, Lady Igarra. I had not intended to come to your world. Instead a hunter —"
She hissed, her entire body flexing at that word, displaying a full snout of teeth.
"Ezreal… he brought you here? How did you—"
She stopped, cutting herself off, and looked around the arena.
"That is not a conversation for here."
Glancing at the prostrate foxkin near her, she tsked.
"Fool… you, like your sister, have no idea what you are facing, and yet you broke the rules… rules that cannot be forgiven."
She held up her hands, and whatever spell had been cast was lifted. Everyone in the stands rose, all eyes turned upon her.
"You know the rules! When one fights on this sand, they are safe from outside things!"
A murmur came from the crowd, and Max watched as everyone bobbed their heads.
"These three forgot that rule! Even if the other two came to stop this fool, they have put their lives on the chopping block! As such, Ifrit can choose whether they shall live or die!"
Those gold eyes focused on him, and Max noticed that Igarra smiled or smirked the same way Aimee did.
"Their lives are yours. Tell me, shall I kill them all?"
"How strong are they?"
Laughing, she shook her head.
"Compared to what I sense in you? They are pests, ready to be swatted away when you tire of their buzzing, but like all pests, if enough come and are left too long, they can cause a wound that might become infected."
"Those two?" Max asked as he pointed to the pair that hadn't attacked him.
"Barely a pest."
"Then I shall fight this one and take what is owed. Those two can leave, unless they wish to share the same fate."
Her smile grew, and Igarra nodded.

“Ifrit… or whatever your name is. I look forward to talking with you soon. Good luck on your climb through the rings of the city. That, I am afraid, I cannot help you through.”
Giving a slight bow, Max watched as the woman turned, moved to where the pair were, and grabbed them by the scruffs of their necks.
In a single bound she was back at the box she had left, yelps coming from the two she held.
“Rhomadous! Try to die with honor!” she shouted.
Max smiled, watching as the foxkin struggled to stand at first.
“Give me everything you have,” Max said, a grin appearing as he spoke. “Maybe you can win, after all.”

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1943153/chapter-299 2024-12-09;

Chapter 299
The foxkin had taken his last breath and Max wondered just how much Igarra knew about the strength of each competitor.

I would say even blindfolded I could have defeated him, but he was broken after she came down.

Do not fool yourself. What we are facing are strong compared to many. I allow us to continue to grow and keep pace. Igarra is a monster. For now we stick with the plan and use them as a stepping stone to get strong enough to return home.

The noise of the spectators forced Max to give them a gesture of appreciation for their applause as he moved toward the gate.

I guess we'll have to grind here for a while then.

***

“What do you mean we are moving? We just got here?”
Kauakan roared with laughter as he put a bit of his blood on a paper one of his attendants had before him. Chaos was everywhere in the house as people moved furniture out the door.
“You just faced Igarra and didn’t bow! You didn’t even buckle!”
“How do you know?” Max asked, ignoring Aimee and her attempt at getting involved in the conversation.
“Two were there who could at least keep their heads raised the whole time. The moment she revealed herself, let her aura out, I was like that fool Rhomadous, face first on the glass floor.”
He spat, shaking his head as a purple tongue came out of his mouth, licking the spot his upper teeth connected.
“At least he had sand to fall face first into. Now, you have been invited to the next ring. We are going to be *gifted* a place to stay by someone who would like to meet you and purchase your contract from me.”
“Wait! Wait!” Aimee shouted. “We are not slaves that can be traded away.”
Grunting, the insect pointed a curved blade at the lizard woman as he shook his head.

“You keep thinking you have power. You are nothing without him, and yet I have looked past that. I ignore every instinct to cut you down and ensure that others know you are not to be harmed because of him. Yet you still seem to think I owe you anything.”
Max wanted to interrupt, but he forced himself to stay silent, watching his companion shake with anger, fury, rage, he wasn’t sure, but the waves of frustration were easy to pick up coming off Kauakan.
“I have given you more tokens than you could ever hope to earn. I know why you are with this one. Someday you hope to become strong off of his blood, and why he lets you, I have no idea. Now, if you want to have that chance, stop interrupting me and understand that from this moment on, in the next ring of the city I am nothing. You are nothing.”
Kauakan pointed a claw at Max, waving it in the air.
“Only he is something.”
Like a damn that broke, Aimee’s facade of being powerful vanished.
She hunched over and nodded once, gazing at the ground, becoming silent.
“Kauakan, was that necessary?”
“Yes!” he exclaimed. “If she acts like that in the next ring of the city, I cannot promise you that one or two or a dozen might not end her life or try. Some might try behind the scenes, and even while poison is frowned upon except on the field of battle, there are those who would do such a thing to snip the string that binds you to her.”
He took a deep breath, multiple times, each exhale sounding like a small growl while he waved his claws in the air.
“You are slowly learning our ways. She must become strong soon, or she will not be able to follow you much longer. If you do not—”
An attendant rushed up, chattering something.
Max almost reacted but didn’t when Kauakan’s bladed arm removed the head of the attendant.
“One who is weak never interrupts the strong unless they are prepared for what might come. Now, collect your things. We need to leave tonight.”
The insect gave a small bow and then stuck a claw in the head he had liberated, lifting it to his teeth, biting off chunks while another pair of attendants came, dragging the headless corpse away.
***
“He’s right,” Aimee said quietly, turning the glass cup in her hands slowly. “Unless I get something that separates me from the rest, I will be like the one he killed just now.”
Max frowned, and Romandis sat there like a statue, not saying a word as he tried to catch up on what had happened downstairs.
“How much more do we need?”
“Two more fights here would have been enough. Even with us betting everything, there isn’t a way to know for certain.”
Max reached across the glass table and squeezed Aimee’s arm.
“I made a promise. I’m going to keep it. Just like I promised my newest friend here, we’re going to build him a shop with a nice door. Even if it means we wait till this next ring of the city or the one after that.”
Water spewed across the table as Romandis choked on the drink he had just taken.
“So… sorry,” he gasped, wiping his mouth. “You cannot be serious. A shop in the next ring? Or the one after? I… I have no skill for that… the money alone, and the competition… it’s impossible… No it would be better to leave me here or let me return back—”
“No.”
Max’s eyes were hard, harder than he had wanted as he glared at the smith.
“I… I need you two. All this killing requires a balance, and I shall see something good come from this. You shall get your shop, and she will get her power.”
The smith opened his mouth then closed it before groaning.

“Very well. Thank you, Max. I am grateful for your friendship.”
“Good. Now that this is all settled, we need to be ready to go. I have my staff and robe. Do the rest of you need to collect anything?”
Aimee and Romandis both chuckled, each of them shaking their heads.
“It would appear that both of us, like you, only have those who are gathered in this room.”
Reaching over, Max gave the smith a pat on his arm and grinned.
“Well I guess that means we are ready. In the meantime, would you be interested in practicing what I showed you?”
Romandis nodded, then pulled an etching tool from his pouch and a small piece of wood, closed his eyes, and sat there.
Chuckling, Max watched as the beastkin’s face scrunched, trying to tap into the mana inside him.
“I’m going to lie down if that is ok,” Aimee stated as she pushed her chair back a little.
Nodding, Max watched as she went to the door and left quietly.
Being kind isn’t easy.
Often kindness is what gets one killed or taken advantage of. Just like love, it can be powerful and destructive. Remember, in this world, it is most likely the latter in both cases.
Knowing his skill was right, Max turned his attention back to Romandis and began whispering tricks to try to find the way to harness his mana.
***
“A mattress… a real mattress.”
“Is that what the call them in your world?” Romandis asked as he watched Max bouncing up and down slightly on the cushion that was upon the glass bedframe.
“Yes. What do you call them here?”
“A pad.”
Shrugging, Max couldn’t help but smile at seeing a single flower in a jar. Its purple leaves were partially wilted, but still it was the first sign of something beautiful that wasn’t food.
“Is your room ok?”
Coughing, the smith nodded.
“I have never imagined something so fine. Even if I died today, I would be happy.”
“Well, wait till you have a shop with a metal door.”
Both of them laughed and turned to leave the room, heading downstairs to where their new host awaited them.
***
If Fowl were here, we both would be dead…
Great willpower was required to keep from laughing as Max listened to his new host and soon to be representative talk.
“Now I have servants for you all, and as I mentioned to Kauakan, this guest house is all yours for the remainder of our partnership.”
Max nodded at Jazzjak. A four-foot-at-best-tall white rabbit with ruby red eyes and massive teeth studied him.
Even though everything seemed cute there was a sense of overwhelming danger that made the others stay back.
“Oh, please, I promise you, while you are guests in my house, no harm will befall you.”
Aimee, Kauakan, and Romandis all nodded, yet it was evident that they were not convinced.
“Ok, forgive me, especially since you are our host, but what kind of creature are you?”
His right ear flopped over sideways when Jazzjak cocked his head a little.
“Ahh, that is right. I am probably new to you. My kind do not typically spend much time outside of this ring unless we are hunting and growing. I am known as a vorpal hunter.”

“And how powerful are most of your kind?”
Even though he had a pink nose, white fur, a fluffy tail, and whiskers, a sinister smile somehow removed all cuteness.
“I know you could kill me, even if I snuck up on you, but those three, I would be able to murder all of them before they even blinked.”
Looking at his companions, Max saw the three of them nodding in unison.
Note to self... don’t pet random cute animals...
“Now then, if you don’t mind, we need to talk business, and I prefer to do it in my house.”
***
Part of Max wanted to smile; the other part of him was tempted to stand, but still he sat on the carpeted floor, already knowing what he was going to ask when alone with Aimee or Romandis about fabric.
Jazzjak’s *office* was a decent sized room with a desk built for his size and a single chair that he sat in. One’s only option was to stand or sit on the floor. After Aimee took a seat, Max joined her, ignoring when Kauakan stayed standing. Their smith friend had gone back to his room, content to test out the pad on his bed.
“Standard contract states that you will get twenty percent of all tokens I acquire from the fight,” Jazzjak rattled off as he flipped through pages of paper. “Aimee is to receive five percent as Ifrit’s muse.”
He paused and clicked his teeth together.
“Tell me again what a muse is?”
“Someone that inspires me to destroy all my opponents,” Max replied. “She has really made me a better killer.”
“I need to get one of those,” the rabbit muttered before moving his paw along the lines.
He read a few last things and then nodded, both ears bouncing up and down when he did.
“Everything looks to be in order. Now then, I added one last addendum this morning, which you had no problems with, is that correct?”
Kauakan coughed and nodded.
“That is correct.”
“What did you add?” Max asked.
“As long as you are in this ring of the city or the next, fighting under my representation, Kauakan can reside here. *If* you die, he shall be given twenty days to return to his ring.”
“And if I get past both of these?”
Clearing his throat, a grin came over Jazzjak’s tiny lips.
“If you manage to make it to the innermost ring, I shall procure for him a house here of his own. Something modest, and I will assist with a few business ventures.”
“What about Romandis? You know what I want for him.”
Clicking his teeth together rapidly, the rabbit nodded.
“Win a match. After that, I will procure the building. Win a second match, I will outfit the building with the needed materials, purchase a stone door, and hire him two workers.”
“And if I make it to the center ring?”
When the rabbit laughed, and then snorted, Max almost lost it, the memory of Cordellia and her laugh coming back to him.
“If you make it to the center ring, every one of these three shall never need to work again, and if they desire to, it will be at their own leisure.”
Nodding, Max leaned forward and watched as the rabbit bit his paw, pressing it to the paper.
“I’m still impressed that we don’t need to sign anything.”
A cough came from behind, and Max knew it had been Kauakan.
“I take it you are still learning our ways?”
“I am.”
“Then I am certain your companions will tell you why that is.”

It is because they are nothing. If they break a contract they die.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Hey all! Just a quick update as I know a lot of people are reading and asking questions ;)

Life always crazy with kids and the holidays. Don't worry - book 6 is completely uploaded and scheduled.

Book 6 ENDS on January 13th! I have to STUB it January 20th!

I'll remind everyone before hand to make sure you're reading and done before I have to take down for Amazon.

The good news? Book 7 starts the day book 6 hits amazon ;)

Thanks for reading and I hope you're enjoying the series. Lots of great comments on the patreon side as well as they read chapter 313 today!

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1947720/chapter-300 2024-12-10;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/100249/reborn-with-a-demonic-core-mana-cultivation-baby]

Chapter 300
“You ready for this?”
Max nodded at Aimee, noticing how she didn’t seem to agree as she stood there with her hip cocked to one side.
“I’ll be fine. Stop worrying,” he replied as Max folded up the pad that had been lying on the stone bench. “From what I have learned, these first few fights will be easy.”
“Nothing here is easy,” she growled. “Everyone here wants you dead. Even the ones who bet money on you are looking forward to the day they can win money off you losing. Champions rise and fall. Some are smart, staying here, not risking their life in the next arena until they are certain they can win.”
Sighing, Max lay on the stone bench, the pad tucked under his head, glad for a little bit of comfort.
“Well, are you at least going to do what we talked about? Jazzjak doesn’t feel like you are going to inflict enough pain before ending the lives of your opponents. Don’t forget, each arena wants more suffering. They want to watch you bleed out your opponents.”
Closing his eyes, Max couldn’t help but try to ignore the way that rabbit had looked, bouncing up and down, angry when he wouldn’t commit to slow kills.
“Each death can earn more tokens. People pay to see that kind of suffering.”

“Then why don’t they fight in here?”
Silence was her only reply as Max felt Aimee moving to the window that looked out onto the arena floor.
“You need to watch this and learn.”
Her tone felt cold. Almost distant. She had been off this morning, having born the brunt of whatever ire he had stirred up. Even Kauakan and Romandis had said their host was correct.
Holding back a groan, Max got up and moved to the window, watching a pair of fighters tearing the flesh off each other.
One was a large lionlike beastkin that had a pair of horns and a long lizardlike tail. The name never translated right, but it was a rare breed from somewhere months away by normal travel. The claws on the multicolored beast were at least four inches long, and right now both hands were gripped on the shoulder of a wolfkin.
The gray wolf was trying to rip the throat out of his opponent, ignoring the channels of flesh he lost every second as the lionlike creature clawed him over and over. Blood flowed as the pair were fighting in close, and the small piece of leather armor that matched Max’s own neck piece was holding off the sharp teeth from ending the fight quicker.
“Why are they here?” Max asked, turning away, unable to watch the spectacle while trying to ignore the shaking of the room from the roar of the crowd. “Why travel this far just to die here?”
“You still don’t get it,” Aimee stated as she moved to stand before him. “We have nothing here. Without power we are nothing. Those people you watched picking fruit and working the fields have nothing. They come home to nothing. If at any moment one believes they have a chance of getting stronger, they will kill and take it.”
She punched Max in the chest, shaking her hand and hissing, as it didn’t even move him.
“I can’t even hurt you! Actually, I hurt myself just trying! Do you have any idea knowing what that is like? … No, you can’t.”
Aimee’s nostrils flared, and Max knew she was mad as she stomped around the room.
“Parents kill their own children if they think it will make them stronger! We don’t have dungeons like you told me about. There is only one tower, and it is controlled by Igarra. If you want to become strong enough to leave this world and finally be able to rest without always wondering who might try to attack you for what you have, you need to prove to her you are worthy of such an attempt!”
Max nodded. Aimee had already told him about the tower and Igarra’s death grip on it.
“But there is order, even in this district and the others.”
“Order,” she scoffed. “It is fear… absolute fear. If one wants to kill another from the third ring on, you’d best do it in a way you won’t get caught, or you challenge them. Just be warned that if you do, others will line up, challenging you. Whole families have been killed in a matter of weeks, only for another person to come and continue the cycle.
“Romandis was honest with you. He is trying to survive and get stronger while not drawing attention. If he gets too strong and doesn’t have anything to offer, then someone can either kill him or force him to be a slave.”
“I won’t let that happen.”
Groaning, she waved her hands in the air.
“Yes… we all believe that the mighty *Ifrit* will stay here forever, protecting us from those who might want what we have.”
The real pain of all this hit again. He was going to leave, and the day he did, they would be vulnerable.
“What if Igarra was gone?”
Both of Aimee’s eyes widened, and she clamped a scaled hand over Max’s mouth and shook her head.

“Never say that,” she whispered. “Do not be foolish enough to think you stand on the same level as she does.”
“I’m not saying I would, I’m just asking if—”
“Don’t! That is foolish because the balance we have now would be removed.”
Aimee took a step back, and her jaw opened for a moment before closing quickly. Instead she moved to the stone bench and kneeled down near it, pulling out her token purse, and started lining up the different tokens she now possessed.
Eight red tokens were in a pile, while two green ones were stacked on top of each other. Finally she pulled out one of the yellow tokens.
“I wish I had an amanguel… a white one, but I do not…”
A chuckle came as the pouch was left on the bench, and Aimee tapped the yellow one.
“This one pieces holds all the rest of these in check. If someone were to remove this, which of the green ones would take its place? How would they treat the other ones beneath it? How much death would come as everyone attempts to gain power in the chaos?”
“But isn’t that how your world works?”
She nodded twice and then shook her head.
“It is and isn’t. Order… honor… power. In chaos, many die, and enough of us know that chaos isn’t our friend. When you killed Kaurma”—Aimee picked up a red token, waving it in the air—“every other one in my village will now try to fill that void. Many will die.”
“So life is pointless and hopeless?”
Groaning, she tossed the red token at him.
“No! Should you stop eating when you are young just because you will die one day? No!”
Grabbing the purse she stuffed the tokens still on the bench into it and then moved to retrieve the one on the floor, huffing as she moved.
“I swear you are going to get me killed with your inability to understand such simple things!”
***
“TONIGHT WE HAVE A NEW FIGHTER! You have heard his name! You know a little about his power!”
Max sighed as the announcer took a few seconds between each statement, trying to work the crowd.
“Can Ifrit take down the Mudaro cousins?!”
Shouts came from the stands, some saying yes, others shouting no.
“One minute remains for any of you who haven’t placed your bets!”
Across from him, Max saw the pair of rhinokins, each wearing leather armor and holding large two-handed hammers.
Both snorted and growled at him; one actually stroked the tip of its horn before pointing at him.
With fifty yards of arena space to work with, Max felt himself not worried at all. He just needed to not get hit.
As the drums played and the crowd’s shouting grew louder, Max waited to see what this pair of ten-foot-tall warriors would bring.
Perhaps we can get some stats or skills from them.
I doubt stats are going to be available anytime soon. Nothing moves with your speed or shows strength higher than yours.
Max nodded as the bells chimed, and both of the rhinokins charged, each coming slightly from the side as they faced him, swinging their hammers that were as long as they were.
At least they work well together.
The one on his left went high, while the one on his right almost had the hammer brushing the arena floor.

Jumping backward slightly, he was impressed to see them plant their feet, shifting their grip and stopping the swing midway as they thrust forward, a sharp point of the weapon on top of the hammer now coming toward him.
The dance began as the pair swung and thrust, sometimes one charging outright, trying to tackle him while the other used their weapon to keep him in place.
Sadly, neither were fast enough, and while their weapons made the ground shake upon connecting with the arena floor, not once had an attack been good enough to hit him.
After a few minutes, the crowds' calls turned to boos, and Max sighed, knowing it was time for him to do something.
Charging the one on his left, Max got in close, using his fists as he had left his staff in the waiting room.
Aimee had tried to hold it for him, and was almost upset when she couldn't take it and learned it was bound to him.
Now he sent out a barrage of kicks and punches, impressed at how well the armor and hide of his opponent seemed to absorb and mitigate each attack.
The one on the left came to assist, barreling toward his back, and Max danced out of the way at the last second, watching as the pair collided and rolled across the floor.
Not waiting for them to get up, Max moved into the mess of limbs and bodies, kicking and punching.
It felt good to use his bare hands, but the fact that it didn't do much damage made Max realize they were probably weaker to piercing weapons than blunt or slashing ones.
Perhaps some sort of natural protection from their hide?
Most likely. Are you going to toy with them longer? Not to agree with the crowd, but this is boring.
One had gotten on its feet while Max kept up his beatdown on the other.
The crowd was booing, and tired of being a spectacle, Max decided to make his move.
Ignoring the thicker parts of the rhinokin's body, he punched the throat and jugular multiple times, dodging each swing that came at him or parrying them with ease.
As the one on the ground choked and coughed, he brought his boot down, crushing the windpipe and turning to its cousin, who was charging again.
[Power Strike]
His fist connected against the side of the rhinokin's lowered head, an attempt to skewer Max bringing its face in close.
The bones crunched, and Max heard a snap as his fist felt for a moment like it was going to go through the hide and bones and into the brain, altering the charge from the strength of the impact.
The beast slid along the ground, slamming into its fallen cousin, not moving at all.
Groans and boos came as the pair lay on the floor, neither moving or breathing.
"It appears Ifrit has won, but we all can admit he did not win our hearts!"
Shaking his head, Max ignored the crowd and moved toward his gate, able to see the frustration on Aimee's face.
***
"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!"
Max wasn't sure if he should laugh or yell back.
Listening to Jazzjak shout was almost as funny as hearing Cordellia talk sometimes.
"They HATE you! HATE YOU!" he yelled again. "You are a smooth skin! You are a danger to us all, and yet you do not even give us the satisfaction of a death worth watching!"
The vorpal rabbit bounced up and down, hopping mad to say the least.
Its pink nose moved like a dancer, twitching every second.
"I was sent a message by others, and you should heed its warning. They will not tolerate such simple killing!"

Max saw Kauakan, Romandis, and Aimee all nodding, each of them keeping their eyes aimed at the floor and not the rabbit who didn't care that Max could snap its neck in a moment.
"What are they going to do?"
A stubby, furry finger pointed at Kauakan.
"Teach him. I'm done…" Jazzjak huffed. "I made a promise and must keep it. Grab your smith, and follow me. I need a walk."
***
Max felt the hug Romandis had given him finally ending, even though it had been well over three gentle taps on the beastkin's back.
"I cannot thank you enough! My own shop!"
Max nodded, watching the smith turn once more and look at the building, the entire floor covered in stone and a metal door leading into it.
"Now we just need to get you trained and some equipment," Max stated as he motioned toward the door. "Ready to head back?"
"No!" exclaimed Romandis. "I'm going to stay here… I… I'm not sure you can understand how much this means to me!"
"Then at least fetch your pad from the house and enjoy it," Max replied, seeing the way his newest friend's eyes seemed to dance in the blue light of the room.
"That is a great idea! Come, let us hurry!"
Now Romandis was moving toward the door almost like a bolt of lightning, laughing and talking nonstop.
Well, at least something good came from today.
***
"Max! Max!"
The pounding on his door wasn't what concerned him; it was the tone in Aimee's voice.
Moving to the door, he opened it after stashing the sand and stone he had been practicing with under his mattress.
"What?" he asked as he flung the door open, seeing Aimee with tears running down her snout. Even Kauakan looked upset.
"It's…"
She stopped, choking on her own words that didn't seem to work.
"You need to see this…" the insect said, his tone not hiding that something bad had happened.
"What?"
"Romandis, he—"
The words didn't hit his ears, Max was past the pair and gone.
A metal door was somewhere on the courtyard of the property, ripped off when Max ran through it.
Like a crazed devil he raced through the city, a blur to anyone who might have seen him coming and going.

27 Chapter 301

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Chapter 301
Opening the door to Romandis's place had been a mistake. Something inside him snapped and everything that had hurt since being taken to this world never felt more raw.

All Max could think about was blood.

He needed to spill it.

He needed to show whoever had made that mistake of messing with someone he cared about what he was going to do to them.

Kauakan was against the wall, pressed against it like a bug trying to avoid being noticed lest it got squashed by the real monster in the room.

"They're ready for you."

Growling Max nodded and moved to the door that led to the arena.

It was time for his pound of flesh.

No... it's time to take a mountain of it.

***

Kill them!
Max didn’t hesitate. That moment had passed. Even without Berserker activated, he was already enraged.
Someone killed him... they murdered him!
His skill said nothing. It was as if it knew how angry he was. It didn’t need to fan the flames that were already ready to cleanse the world.
The crowd roared, ten thousand strong. A group of people, once again who were supposed to be better than the ones beneath them, called out for blood, almost frothing at the mouth from their desire for it.
Today Max gave them their fill.
His first fight had been boring. Even when playing with the two warriors he faced, both rhinokin were too slow, and even their defenses and health couldn’t stand against his power. The crowd booed at him for ending that fight how he did. Jazzjak’s scolding about the lack of obedience had been weird. That was until he found the body of Romandis.
Apparently watching someone punch a pair of meat sacks to death wasn’t enough for this crowd.
Either someone had sent him a message for killing those two, or Jazzjak was right, and it was an attempt to enrage him.
Regardless of the reason, the crowd was getting their wish today.
More stone daggers flew at him, a half dozen that barely pierced his skin and drew almost no blood as Max quietly used his skill to lessen their damage and avoid the attacks aimed at his head.
Walls rose from the arena floor, sand and stone scattered and mixed together.
Another barrage of sand assaulted him, yet the flesh that was removed grew back in time, not even the distraction its master had hoped it might be.
“Only five remain from the original twelve! What happened to this crew?! Can Ifrit withstand the—Oh! Another is now missing their heart!”
Howls of excitement came as Max felt the beating heart in his hand. The lizard warrior was still standing, just now realizing that the very thing it needed in order to live was ten yards away.
You were right... that day with the elves... holding the beating heart of one before you... it is an amazing sensation.
Letting the organ fall to the floor, Max moved with grace, deflecting stone and glass attacks with his staff, leaping over walls, and taking out this team of twelve that everyone said was unbeatable.
They were good, armed with both Stone and Sand Masters. The fighters had been fast, and the two who were designed to absorb damage could do that.
Unfortunately, Max didn’t belong here.

They were not at his level.
None of them were.
The ice spear he had been forming raced toward its target, catching the stone caster that had lost sight of it in the cloud of dust he had formed from the sand, using their own spells against them.
Another died when he sent a stone dagger that had pierced his leg at the last Sand Master.
Finally, it was just him and the last one.
It was the strongest of the bunch.
Each of her attacks had more power when she sent the stones at him. That was why he had broken both of her arms and legs over the course of this fight. He could have killed her easily. Yet she needed to suffer, and it appeared others needed to watch it.
Lying there, face first in the sand, Max almost felt pity for a moment.
No, it wasn't pity.
She was weak.
She had underestimated him.
Just like the fools who had murdered Romandis two days ago. He would find them, and when he did, they would wish death came quickly.
"You fought well," he said and then laughed, shaking his head. "Actually, you didn't."
No more words came as his staff came down, breaking the neck of the tigerkin.
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Stone Mastery - Rare has been upgraded to Stone Mastery - Epic]
As the crowd cheered, Max glanced at the other notifications he cared about.
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Sand Mastery - Rare has been upgraded to Sand Mastery - Epic]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Wood Mastery]?]
[Yes / No]
The other skills that had been consumed were lower or equal, and he gained nothing.
Inside him, the fire burned. It wanted to be released, and so as the crowd cheered, Max gave them what they wanted.
Waves of flame washed out from him, burning the corpses and their flammable items.
He didn't care about it.
He didn't need it.
All Max needed right now was revenge.
***
"I'm sorry, no one still knows anything?"
Max grunted, acknowledging Aimee as he lay on the stone bench, using the small cushion provided for his head.
"I know you're upset, but both Kauakan and Jazzjak are doing everything they can to find those responsible."
"Are they?!" he shouted, his voice echoing off the stone walls.
She flinched and nodded.
"Sorry… I'm… We need to get you something strong. Something that will help you be able to defend yourself in case someone tries to hurt me by hurting you."
"We're still short on money. Jazzjak said—"
Max rose to his feet and was across the room in her face before she could finish her reply.
His eyes burned, and she moved half a step back as he spoke.
"No. He will do it now, and I will owe him, but I cannot lose another friend. Do you understand?"
She nodded, and a tear formed and then another.
Slowly Max took a deep breath, letting out the rage he felt and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close and feeling her tremble at his touch.
"I cannot lose you. I won't lose you. Doing so would mean I would lose myself."
He whispered those words, not for her benefit but for his own.

This path we are on. I am able to walk it, but are you?
Unsure who was trembling more, Max shook, unable to stop himself for several minutes.
***
“I see the look in your eyes. You are certain this is the path you want to take?”
Max glared at Jazzjak, nodding only once.
“Unless you are willing to guarantee her life with yours, there is no other option.”
Nodding, those white ears flopped back and forth.
“Very well. I shall take her to the next ring. I know a few people, and it will cut into your future earnings—”
“I don’t care about tokens!” Max exclaimed. “I only cared because it was meant to help my friends! Keep the damn tokens! Find me the one who killed Romandis, and I will let you have everything I earn!”
“I’m sorry. We do not have relationships like yours… even our children are… always at risk for a fight. I will increase the reward, and I shall take your friend to the next ring to procure her something to protect herself with.”
Max nodded and turned, leaving the rabbit as it stood by his tiny desk.
After opening the door, he paused and glanced back at Jazzjak.
“Get her two if you can. I’m serious. Everything I make, it’s yours.”
Jazzjak bowed so low, both ears flopped over his head and touched the ground.
“I will do for her what you ask. Just know… the one who may take over your contract… they may be—”
“I don’t care.”
Storming out of the room, Max left the rabbit there, his pink nose twitching nonstop.
***
Blood was still smeared across the stone floor. Behind him, a single red paw print was visible on the metal door.
In the corner of the far back of the room was a mattress.
Damn fool!
Picking up an empty glass container, Max flung it into the wall, watching the thing shatter into hundreds of pieces.
“HOW?! HOW CAN YOU LET THIS HAPPEN?!”
Shaking his fist at the ceiling but knowing he was looking up at the sky, Max wanted to beat every god that was up there.
“How many more must die? Why did you give me this skill?!”
Dropping to his knees, a small tuft of orange fur, glued to the floor with dried blood caught his attention.
Sobbing, Max let the flood out.
***
“Listen, I know you’re upset but you need—”
“I’m not upset anymore,” Max stated, cutting off Kauakan. “I’m done being upset. From now on I have one goal, and anything or anyone that gets in my way will be removed.”
The insect almost missed a step as they walked down the stone hallway toward his waiting area for the arena.
No one escorted them.
It was weird in some ways, having always had an escort in the colosseum back in Peltagow, but here, once you were shown your place, no one bothered you. Of course it was a single hallway that led to your room, and right outside it was the gate which led to the arena floor. There was no need for an escort.
“Still, this next fight is the last one for you here. Win or lose. You will be fighting a champion, and unfortunately, I do not know which one.”
“It doesn’t matter.”
He felt Kauakan move quicker, picking up his pace, and when the insect was ahead a few paces, he turned, holding up his clawed arm.
“It does! Listen to me for a moment! Please! Our fates are just as intertwined! You might not be afraid, but I am!”

Max paused and saw for the first moment that this creature that looked to have been created for killing was shaking.
“You’re afraid?”
“YES!”
Kauakan waved his arms, spinning around a few times in the hallway before coming to stand before Max.
“I am not strong like you, and I am not getting the treatment you are giving that woman! All I have now is the connection to you, and if I am honest, I am scared after seeing what your friend… what they did to him.”
Max couldn’t help but frown. Still he nodded, understanding now that he hadn’t considered how much his success really meant to Kauakan.
“If I die, what happens to you?”
“If I’m lucky? I’ll be cast back to where I came, still have some tokens, and maybe I could try to resecure my spot again. There is no doubt the battle for that has already begun, and I’m not certain who is going to keep ahold of it. If you don’t make it to the center ring, I am as good as dead.”
“Because there will be no one to protect you?”
“Exactly.”
A weight once again fell upon Max’s shoulders, and he wanted to scream, wanted to punch the wall, wanted to use his magic to tear the very foundations of this building down.
“Forgive me… I had not realized how this impacted you. Tell me what I need to know.”
Kauakan breathed what Max assumed was a sigh of relief.
“These champions for this arena make everyone else look like someone from my city ring. I know you are fast, I know you are strong, but they are just like you.”
Max listened to Kauakan as he talked about skills these champions might have and discussed the equipment they would own.
Even as the conversation continued well into reaching the waiting room, Max only heard one thing.
There are going to be skills and abilities to acquire.
That is why we do this. To get strong enough to protect those you care about.
Max froze, and whatever Kauakan was saying stopped, noticing the change in his posture.
Do you really care about that? I mean all you ever wanted was to consume everything we encountered.
We have both changed… if you stay on this path and go down it too far, I may become again what you once feared. If that happens you will not be the one your friends or Tanila will recognize. When you see the looks on their faces, two things will happen.
Max waited, ignoring the claws Kauakan waved in his face.
Either you will give in to the hunger, killing even them and becoming a threat to all. Only time will tell if you are able to grow strong enough that none will ever be able to stop us ,and that path is… foolish. Before I evolved, I was simply an urge, overcome by my base instinct. Now, together, I have seen multiple paths. Even now I know the paths before us are varied, and not all lead to you ever making it home for many years. If ever.
And the other path?
You kill yourself.
Max started to reply, but he knew that was a possibility. Multiple times he had been committed to ending his own life versus putting his friends at risk.
So, now what?
Fight. Win. Grow stronger as I consume what I can. Just know, Max Hoste, that my end goal does not stop with this world or yours. Either we become stronger than everything out there, things you cannot begin to fathom yet,

like the dragon you met before the tower, or something, someone will kill us. That same goal is what drives my two counterparts. Somewhere out there both of them are active. I can sense them now, just as I know I am closer to the next step in my evolution.
Max started to ask something when a claw poked him in the chest.
Go. You have a fight to win. We will talk later.

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1951156/chapter-302 2024-12-12;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/51664/ajaxs-ascension-formerly-gamer-reborn-stubbing]

Chapter 302
“I’m sorry, say all that again,” Max said, shaking his head, ignoring the claw poking his chest.
“Did you seriously ignore everything I just said? Where were you?”
It was always hard to read Kauakan as there were almost no facial indications, but the fact the insect touched him meant something.
“Lost in thoughts… It’s been a hard time. I’m sorry. Tell me the important stuff.”
Grunting, Kauakan moved to where the door was and pushed it open, leaving him in the hallway.
***
It’s a good thing Batrire isn’t here…
Max couldn’t help but be impressed with the specimen before him.
“TONIGHT, SOMEONE WILL DIE, AND IT WILL BE IN A MOST GLORIOUS WAY!”
Pandemonium broke out through the crowd as they waited for a fight that Max knew was going to be his first real test since coming to Quan Ma.
Before him stood a thirteen-foot-tall purple spider, black streaks running along each leg and under her body.
At the section where the eyes and mouth would normally be sat a purple body, covered in chain armor with four arms and a pissed off looking spider woman staring at him.
She was hissing, bits of spider silk occasionally coming out, and for a moment Max wanted to offer her something to drink to clear up that problem, but decided doing so would be impossible over this noise.
A weird looking swordlike weapon was in each hand, five feet long and made from a metal that was dark green.
His staff felt awfully small compared to whatever she was using, and now Kauakan’s warnings really felt like Max hadn’t paid near enough attention.
“Sheoraoa, are you ready?!”
The woman raised all four arms, dancing and turning around on her eight legs, waving the weapons in the air. She appeared to be enjoying the cheers that sounded for her.
“Ifrit, are *you* ready?”
Ignoring how the announcer had made that statement sound less hopeful, Max played the role he had promised to do. Raising his staff, he sent a small fireball into the air at the stone ceiling way above.
“Then let's get ready to SLAAUUGGHTERRRRR!”

Drums sounded, and Max focused on his opponent, watching as she bent down lower, legs poised for movement.
Poison, speed, webs, multiple skills, strong, and doesn't seem to get hurt easily… Hopefully Kauakan didn't leave anything else out.
The bells sounded, and Max immediately darted to the side, avoiding a tackle that came from Sheoraoa as she moved faster than everyone he had ever witnessed.
Except for the hunter.
Max was casting Ice Nova, but as she ran past the spot he had been in, she turned, and web began spraying from her backside, squirting out a stream that was almost eight inches wide.
Summoning an air wall, Max put it a foot past the exit and watched as a shower of web cascaded over it for a second before the wall shattered under the pressure.
Thick, sticky webs began to fall from the sky now, and Max let his spell go, watching as the spider seemed to sense it, turning and jumping into the air as its back end continued to focus on where he was.
She was twisted almost backward at the top half, and Max cursed as the spider went airborne, sending a thread toward a wall of the arena, creating a carpet of more sticky liquid and hardening web.
Having missed his Ice Nova, Max cast Fire Nova, racing around the arena floor, trying to get close enough for when the spell would go off, yet watching as Sheoraoa laid down a never-ending trail of the sticky stuff.
She tracked him like there was a string attached to him already, and when his spell went off and the flames rolled out in a wave, the white substance ignited and began to burn.
Fire traveled along the section of web that covered about a third of the arena floor, and Sheoraoa stopped the rushing fluid from her butt, preventing it from traveling up the stream she had been sending out.
Instead, she jumped to a non-burning side of the arena floor, the flames that came from Max washing over her legs and the underside of her lower body.
Nothing happened to her, and not asking why, Max moved to another element, hating that he had to reveal more of his power.
A ball of lightning formed in the air as he set himself against the charge that was coming at him, another tackle-like attack as the four weapons swung at him.
His Sonar skill and weapon mastery told him the truth.
There was no way he could dodge all these attacks without using a skill.
[Evasion]
Flashing green, his staff became a whirlwind, magically moving fast enough to deflect the two strikes on his left as he sidestepped the tackle attack, watching as Sheoraoa skidded almost to a sudden halt, turned, and began attacking with all four swords.
Magical sparks came each time the green weapons struck his staff, and a weird sensation flowed through him as he backed up under the pressure.
Her height gave her an advantage, but Max's skill kept the attacks from finding any of his flesh.
Knowing that he couldn't deal with her speed and the combinations, Max cast Ice Prison, watching as one leg started to get locked down, and before it had traveled more than two feet, the leg nearest to it started kicking at the ice, shattering pieces of it and sending it crashing to the ground.
Six seconds.
The ball of lightning was growing, hovering twenty yards in the air, and Max let it grow.
Letting Evasion help him defend, Max darted forward toward her body, summoning an ice wall to provide just a moment of relief from one side.
[Magical Strike]
[Power Strike]
[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Attack]
[Flurry]

His weapon glowed as the skills all stacked in a moment, and when it moved toward Sheoraoa, she shimmered, a black color covering her body.
His staff connected against the hard purple colored exoskeleton.
His eyes widened as the woman was thrown back ten yards, a crack running down the front of her purple body.
Green blood seeped from the crack, not a geyser or a torrent like he had expected.
Sheoraoa's red eyes widened, and her weapons and hands moved toward the section of her body that was bleeding slightly.
Once again, the arena had gone silent, and Max was confused.
Her skill blocked all of that damage.
It was so fast… all those attacks hit the same spot, and that was all the damage it did.
A scream of rage came from the spider woman's mouth, and she spewed a green liquid that matched her blood at him.
Jumping backward and not pressing the attack, Max felt his Evasion skill end.
Neither of them moved after her last attack, the green liquid steaming on the sand where he had been at.
Certain no one could have seen all those abilities as anything more than one attack, Max was grateful when her body flashed black once more.
I can help you if you want. This is your first true test.
What else are we going to face if this is the kind of monster… or beings that are in the arena here? I mean—
His question was cut off as Sheoraoa came at him, not moving as fast as before, appearing more cautious in her attack.
The crowd had roared back to life, and Max wasn't sure what their expectations were, but the amount of mana he was still feeding the ball of lightning above was causing it to glow and start to give off light.
Dodging and moving as he swung, parried and tried to keep Sheoraoa distracted from his real plan, Max let her get close.
He let her feel like she was succeeding.
Knowing his next plan was going to hurt, Max didn't avoid the attack that came, leaving his arm wide open.
Searing pain shot through him as the green sword cut his left hand off just a few inches past his wrist.
Unlike Sheoraoa and when she was injured, his blood didn't seem to wait, but poured out immediately.
[Regeneration]
As the crowd went wild, Max moved, sensing the change in speed as she no longer held back.
Sheoraoa's weird face smirked as she came at him, weapons once more moving like a twister of death. Her red eyes almost sparkled as she gazed down upon her victim.
[Blind]
When they went black and her attacks slowed, flailing wildly and stumbling back a step, Max pulled the ball of lightning down, unleashing the over eight-foot-wide ball of electricity.
Unaware of what was coming, Sheoraoa spun slightly, slashing in different directions, trying to prevent whatever Max might do.
The spell struck with a cracking sound as all eight legs went rigid, straight like an arrow, popping up out of the sand, which for a moment had turned white where she had been standing.
Green swords flew into the air as her arms thrust outward and landed yards away as Sheoraoa crashed onto the underside of her lower body.
Ignoring the pain in his left hand as flesh and bone began to regrow, Max was upon his foe in a moment, swinging his staff as hard as he could at the spot he had cracked.

Chips of the purple body broke, and the burnt green blood that had been there began to flow faster, more and more of her body and protective layer falling to the ground, leaving a gaping wound.
Thrusting the regenerating stub into the hole, Max felt a twinge of pain when her blood touched his skin, but a notification made him smile.
[Poison Resisted]
Sheoraoa appeared to be struggling to move, her purple legs starting to twitch, and the arms flailed differently upon his arm being thrust inside her.
[Weakness]
[Demonic Magic]
[Festering Touch]
She shook, a cry coming from her mouth, green blood spewing forth from it as she made that noise, and Max didn't care.
These people wanted a show. They wanted to see what he was capable of.
Give it to them.
Before his heart could beat once, Max had one leg in his good hand, his foot braced against the side of the hard outer exoskeleton and pulled.
It took about two seconds, but with a stretching and popping sound, the leg yanked free from the section it connected to the body with, pulling a trail of ligaments, other chunks of flesh and creating a faucet for blood.
Another cry came from his opponent, but Max didn't care, discarding the leg and grabbing the next.
[Ice Prison]
This time the ice rose up around Sheoraoa's body, in a position where her legs which didn't seem able to bend yet couldn't help.
Immobilized, she couldn't do anything as in less than twenty seconds, Max had ripped each of her legs off.
Thunderous applause and cheers filled his ears, encouraging him to continue this assault, and Max gave in.
He didn't care about what they wanted.
This was a message he was sending.
He was signing this letter to anyone who thought for a moment they could touch another person he was connected to.
With his left hand forming, the fingers almost all there, he jumped on top of Sheoraoa, moved to her torso, and wrapped both arms around her waist, bending low as he planted his feet.
Roaring he squeezed and thrust with every ounce of strength in his legs, tearing the spider's top half from the bottom, feeling her shudder, and a screech that almost hurt came from the woman's mouth.
Tossing her to the ground, Max hopped off, doing his best to avoid the pooling green blood.
Smiling, he used his new Wood Mastery skill, summoning his staff to his outstretched hand, earning applause and wondering how many of them would wonder what he could do with this weapon.
Tonight was a symphony of carnage.
The announcer had wanted a slaughter, and he was the monster in the story, told to children who thought they were brave enough to hear about dangerous things.
Cracks and crunches came as he shattered all four arms as she lay on the sand face down.
Each strike brought another cheer from the crowd, and a memory surfaced every time they called out.
In his mind he saw his queens at the colosseum, acting just as these spectators were.
No… these are much worse.
Sheoraoa couldn't move, her arms unable to work and her head barely able to turn to keep from breathing in sand as Max moved to stand by her head.
Holding his staff high, Max spun a few times.
"Should Ifrit finish her?!"

The moment the question was asked by the announcer, a resounding call for the last blow came, and Max delivered it.
He didn’t care about what the crowd thought.
All he was concerned with was the beautiful sensation that filled his soul as the shock of cold and electricity overwhelmed him.

29 Chapter 303

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1952874/chapter-303 2024-12-13;

Chapter 303
[20 Strength Consumed]
[20 Dexterity Consumed]
[20 Constitution Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Would you like to learn [Harden Body]?]
[Yes / No]
Everything inside him wanted to click yes, but Max had never had an easy time with anything that came from this world.
Still the sound of the arena was jarring enough.
“AND THAT IS HOW IFRIT WILL END HIS TOUR HERE!”
Max gave a wave, flicking his staff to remove the green blood it had acquired upon the death blow.
Instead he moved toward the gate, ignoring the replay the announcer called out.
At the gate, he could see Kauakan waiting for him, and it appeared that the insect was laughing.
***
“You have no idea how upset I am that I missed your fight,” Jazzjak grumbled as he sat in his chair at his desk. Those little paws tried to drum on the wood, but Max was certain no one but him could hear the little padded tap the fingers made.
“But everything is okay with Aimee?”
“Yes, yes,” he replied. “She is in the next ring of the city, recovering from what she has acquired. I promised to not tell you and will let her reveal it if she desires. Just know that she could easily kill Kauakan if she desired now.”
Max felt his eyebrows go up at those words and was glad that his insect friend wasn’t in the room.
Sitting there on the floor, it made him wonder just how all that worked. Aimee never really gave much detail about the orbs or gems that they talked about. He wasn’t sure if she didn’t know or didn’t want to share.
“Are the items she got that powerful or?”
The drumming of the tiny fingers stopped, and Jazzjak sat up a little straighter, scooted his chair closer to the desk, and leaned over it, resting his chin on both hands.
Max almost chuckled, watching that pink nose and those whiskers dance, but he kept quiet, wondering what the vorpal bunny was going to say.
“There are four different colors of stones or gems… well, five, but none will ever see the fifth unless Igarra herself was to grant one. The colors match the tokens you earn, and she was granted a yellow and green one.”
The rabbit pulled on his desk and set a tiny red gem the size of the rabbit’s paw on the desk.
His nose twitched and shook for a few seconds before he sighed and picked it up and tossed it to Max.

“Don’t use it, but you can look at it. That is worth a lot, even though it isn’t very powerful.”
It was like a ruby that hadn’t been cut or polished. Dull, no luster, but inside he could feel the power it held.
“And one just absorbs these? How?”
Jazzjak tsked and held his paw out, and without complaining, Max moved closer, setting the gem in the rabbit’s paw.
“I’m not sure I want to share this with you, but I know at some point someone will. I would caution you to try to absorb one, as there are rumors that your kind does not often succeed.”
“What kind of rumors?”
The pink nose danced, and the rabbit let out a string of noises, causing a servant to leave.
“Let me get us something to drink. This may take a while.”
***
Max tried to not laugh as he sipped the small cup that was given to him.
Carrot alcohol… What kind of messed up world is this?
Jazzjak leaned back in his chair, sipping the drink, and for a moment Max would have sworn he heard a sigh or some kind of purr come from the rabbit.
“You know that your kind isn’t liked. There have been a few dozen of your species that have come to our world. Some were like you, yet most were not.”
Taking another small sip from his metal cup, Jazzjak closed his eyes.
“The hunter who seeks you has been a plague to our world for some time. Before I was born and my mother as well. He and Igarra have some weird agreement, it appears. I’m not certain how, but neither have fought in a while because it appears neither is certain who will win anymore.
“When you make it to the center of the city.” Jazzjak paused, opening his eyes, and gave Max a *you will make it* look. Closing them again, he continued.
“You will find the arena in the middle is nothing like what is in this ring and the next. Everyone who fights in these are from this world. Things that fight in the last one are not always from here.”
“As in others come here to fight?”
Shrugging, Jazzjak took a long drink and sat up, placing his cup on his desk.
“I’m not sure why, but each one that comes here is seeking something. Not many of us know what lies beyond the tower, as Igarra keeps that knowledge secret. A few have been allowed in, and she always speaks of how they have ascended, yet none have ever returned.”
Turning the cup in his paws a few times, the rabbit stared at the drink for a good ten seconds, before he sighed.
“If I am honest… I have killed many. I dream of being stronger, but I know that I cannot risk it unless I must. Even taking you in was a gamble, but there is a reason I took that risk.”
Max could sense the change in the rabbit, felt him relax for a moment.
“My mate has just given birth to our first litter. If they are to survive in the coming time, I will need to ensure their chances of acquiring power.
“I have seen how you look at me and know that you do not think I am dangerous, but know that both my mate and I could ravage many in this ring before we would be cut down by those who can do the same to us.”
“Family changes things.”
“No,” Jazzjak replied, his body once again returning to a predator aura. “Children. My mate and I have an understanding. If our death means the survival of our children, neither of us will hesitate to kill the other.”
Those beady eyes didn’t flinch, and the pink nose was not moving at all.
“I see. So my kind has been a thorn in your people’s side for a while.”
Chuckling, the rabbit nodded, both ears flapping slightly from the movement.
“A good change of discussion. Yes. They come for something. Some die, some live. Almost always, many of my people die.”

“How do they arrive?”
Shrugging, Jazzjak picked up his cup and downed the last of it.
“I have no idea. Yet another thing that Igarra doesn’t share with us.”
“What if I could tell you what I know about the towers and what is beyond them. Would that be worth anything?”
Jazzjak’s nose had been twitching for a few seconds, and at Max’s question it froze. He held up a hand and let out a loud screech, and suddenly the four servants Max knew were in the room all vanished, leaving just the two of them alone.
“What you say is dangerous… dangerous to me and you… especially if Igarra knew you shared such knowledge.”
“So that is a no?” Max asked, giving a wink, as he could sense the vibrations of the rabbit’s foot tapping against the ground hidden under the desk.
“Do not play games with me. I would… pay for the knowledge, but I have leveraged much to get your friend those stones. Win one fight… no, two in the next arena, and then we will talk. If you are still willing to share the knowledge, I will see what I can pay.”
Max shook his head and smiled.
“No. I will tell you now, and if the moment comes, and you can get me a yellow skill stone or gem, I shall take it. If not, I understand.”
Cocking his head, Jazzjak twitched a few times.
“You are strange… you hold the power, the knowledge, and could barter with so many others, and yet you offer it freely, even when I told you what it was worth.”
“You took a risk. You brought us in and have kept every part of our bargain. I… I ignored your advice, and it cost me a friend. As such, I will trust you to do what is right, even if that doesn’t happen here often.”
The fur-covered fingers drummed the desk for a moment, and then Jazzjak smiled.
“Very well. I am eager to listen.”
***
You are better than I imagined you might be after that fight. I can feel the wall you have built. Behind it is a mound of dangerous things.
There is no other option. Tell me, do you think those gems or stones would be dangerous to me? To us?
It felt like his skill was drumming fingers on a wooden desk and lying there on his floor, Max couldn’t help but chuckle out loud.
Without getting more time with one I cannot be certain. I would like to see how they are absorbed, how long it takes for one to recover. If that lizard woman of yours had let us watch, I could possibly see how it worked.
It feels weird to think that their whole system is different from ours. I know you already said each world can have its own, but still, this world seems broken. Who is the god that benefits from all this?
I’m not certain, but I think we shall find that out before we are able to leave this world.
What about all those that come to this world? Why would they do that?
I still cannot recall everything… the stronger we become, the more I can recall, and I sense we are drawing nearer to the next stage of my evolution with each one you defeat.
When that happens… I know there is so much more I can share.
I still feel like I should call you something. I mean… I know Bob was meant as a bad thing, but there were times when I called out as I ran that I wished I knew what to say to summon you.
There has never been a name but what I am called. I am Consume. All I have ever been, all I have ever felt inside me was a desire to grow from the deaths of everything around me. Yet now…
Max waited. Minutes stretched as he felt the skill that he had fought against for what felt like forever trying to come up with something to say.
You, Max Hoste, have changed me. All I can remember is that in previous moments of when I was possessed, I changed the host. Everything I desired

was fulfilled, until they were cut down. At first, I thought you would be like them. I could sense inside you a desire to get stronger. When you killed that elf, Serhmy, it awakened me. You felt the hunger and desire.
A laugh came inside his head, not the weird, crazed one that had come so many times before, but instead something like a chuckle.
When you killed those thieves and murderers, and you slaughtered that woman, I was almost certain you would give in. After you killed James, I was certain you would let me have my way. Then your party saved you… Tanila saved you.
Max's heart broke at those memories. He recalled that moment where all he wanted to do was get stronger, lying to get into dungeons, wanting nothing but the rush that came with each death of something stronger.
I had to change when you wouldn't give in. Even when I tried to taunt you with the possible death of your friends if you didn't let me win. Yet your willpower and love for them kept me at bay.
Long before you got that Formidable Mind skill, I knew this time would be different. Whoever picked you to receive me was either the greatest tactician in the system or the luckiest god of all.
Max laughed, not caring that his room was dark and it was time to sleep.
His skill laughed with him.
You may call me Bob. No one else can though.
It's a pleasure to finally meet you, Bob.

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 304
Three days later they passed the rigorous inspection by the guards at the gate and made their way into the next ring of Quan Ma.
"Never had I imagined seeing any of this."
Max felt like he could understand a little bit of how Kauakan felt as the man stared in wonder from the-open top carriage they were riding in.
Two cowkin pulled the cart, their hair shining and perfectly arranged as they moved along the stone streets.
Not a single building was made of glass. Everything here was made of stone, and at least half of them had statues and carvings on their larger properties and walls.
Grass grew in the yards that were filled with dirt, and Max could smell that the air was cleaner.
"I can taste it," Jazzjak stated as his nose moved constantly. "No matter how many times I have been allowed to come in here, it always leaves me longing to return."
"How much? How much does it really cost to live here?"
The vorpal rabbit turned to look at Kauakan, who waited for an answer.
"Do you have any idea of how much I must have to live where I do?"
Slowly, the insect nodded.
"Multiply that by twenty or more."
A gargled cough came from Kauakan as he stuck the tip of his hooked claw between his teeth, pulling out a piece of flesh from somewhere.

“What do the ones who live here do to stay here?” Max asked as he ignored the different beastkins, insects, and he wasn’t sure what the demon-looking beings were that stayed hidden in shadows watching as the three of them rode down the street.
“Old power and money. Slaves, crops, building skills, crafting skills, and more. Many will fall in the coming days, making wagers, risking fortunes, all for a chance at what lies beyond the last gate.”
Jazzjak motioned to the tower that rose into the sky, a sun on each side of it, framing it in a special way.
“If one can make it there, the potential for true power is possible. None have ever lived there and then returned to this section of the city. Once you reach the center, you stay there forever, or you die.”
Max felt a weird sensation at that truth.
“And yet the risk is worth it,” Kauakan muttered, earning a nod from the rabbit.
None of them talked as the three of them sat there, on full display as the true inhabitants of this ring of the city openly watched their arrival.
Max suddenly laughed, his outburst not only surprising his two companions but also making a few of those on the sidewalks take a few steps back.
“Sorry, I’m just thinking about how much fun it’s going to be to ruin so many lives here.”
Both rabbit and insect joined in, the trio of them laughing at the mayhem they hoped to cause.
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“Remember, each of these fighters will be like Sheoraoa or better,” Kauakan stated once more. “You cannot hold back, but you must still make them suffer before ending their life.”
“Seems like it’s not fair if the fights are this difficult and yet the crowd expects us to put on a show,” Max replied, gazing out the open window that looked down upon the arena.
A hundred rows of stone seats, each one carved into the row, ran in a circle underneath him. Nine large opulent boxed areas sat on the opposite side of him, reserved for those he had yet to learn much of except that many of them could go toe to toe with the ones he would face. The center one was a good deal larger, and Max had learned it was Igarra’s. A curtain was always pulled, and no one ever knew if she was watching, but Max didn’t feel like he would have to wonder about that.
There is no way she won’t be watching.
“Are you two about ready to leave?”
Max nodded and turned to where Jazzjak was waiting at the door.
“Tell me, are you allowed to bet on me?”
Both of his companions chuckled, and Max waited to hear why.
“We are not *allowed* to bet on you,” Jazzjak replied, rising up and down on his feet.
“We are *forced* to.”
“Forced? What or why?”
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“And the fact you were a smooth skin,” Kauakan added.
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Nodding, Max glanced over his shoulder one more time at the arena, ignoring the fact he was trying to figure out where all the spectators would come from to watch this event, instead considering the words he had just heard.
The weight of others’ lives never gets easy to carry.
“Let’s go. I need to sleep,” Max said as he moved toward the door.
***
Everything Max had witnessed before was like child’s play.
Above the arena floor a crystal like the one back in his colosseum hung, now showing the fight that was almost over.
Orange blood and goo covered the patchwork of stone and sand, all from the creature Max had no idea could exist.
It used to have a larger body, almost like a blob or slime that was twelve feet tall and had long stretchy arms and legs. Now it was only about four feet tall and was barely more than a pile that reacted slightly to each block that struck it.
“I thought it would be tougher than that,” Max said as he stood next to Kauakan and watched the mantis that had a very high level of Stone Mastery, from what Max had seen, move closer and closer.
“I’ve never seen one of those before. I don’t even know what they are. I think it’s from the center of the city.”
“They can fight here?”
“Ask Jazzjak; he would know. I’ve heard of some being sent here to put on a show and to be a challenge, but this one hasn’t done much since the bells rang. The truth is there are over fifty different beastkin variations, some mutations of them, countless insects like myself, and even a few abnormal ones from experiments. It is only here and the next arena you get to see a real variety of what’s out there.”
Nodding, Max watched the fight, surprised at how it had gone down, but he understood one could use the power of the stones scattered along the arena wall. It made sense to do what the mantis had. Dodging and weaving away from the opponent’s slower attacks, it had never let up on the constant barrage that removed chunks of the goo-based body.
The crowd laughed, watching as the shape was squished on two sides, the goo being forced out on all the edges, falling to the arena floor.
Loud boos came occasionally but stopped as their efforts did nothing to change the fight.
Moving to the place where the stone blocks had smashed the goo together, the mantis slammed a bladed claw into a pile.
Triumphantly it raised its claw, orange gel dripping from the edge.
Suddenly its claw jerked forward, right as the crowd had cheered, and a string of goo reached up from the pile on the floor.
In two seconds every bit of the orange mess that was spread around the hundred yards of the arena floor was moving, racing like arrows to the spot that had been held upward in victory a moment ago.
Max watched as the mantis slashed at the strands that were forming to the bit on its arm, cutting them, but they stuck to that blade now.
In ten seconds the blob had grown large enough to almost cover the mantis as it tried to escape, using blocks to rise upward on, only to be pulled down by the goo, tipped headfirst to the arena floor.
More and more piled on, and the flailing insect’s movements slowed down as the weight of the mass pressed it into the sandy floor.
The blocks that came trying to assist got stuck inside, not penetrating like they had before.
“Well, that’s new,” Kauakan stated. “How do you win against that?”

“Not with stones,” Max replied. “Who picks these fights?”
A whistle came from the insect next to him, and Max knew he had just snorted. “These are supposed to be random. Tokens in a jar. If it is, that Stone Master’s luck just ran out.”
***
“You have been waiting for this match all night! Our final one for the evening! All the way from the slums to your arena: Ifrit!”
Shaking his head in disgust, Max moved down the stairs from his waiting area, listening to the shouts of everyone he passed. Some invisible barrier kept them back as a few pressed themselves into it, shouting things he couldn’t understand over the noise.
It was a frenzy as he made his way down the hundred levels, wondering still if everyone in this ring had come out tonight just to watch him.
Kauakan had been right. There were so many different beastkin in attendance, and he saw at least twenty he had never known existed scattered amongst the crowd.
Finally at the bottom, he jumped down into the arena, easily landing on the sand below, and rolled before standing up. Picking up his staff, he had tossed down, Max moved to his spot that was marked with a big *X* like all the others had stood on.
“Ohhh… this might not be good for his opponent!”
No one knew who his opponent was, or at least Max was told it would be this way. Each person in the stand had a small metal tablet, and he had seen them all place bets, holding up a glowing rune before wagering whatever they felt was a fair amount.
“Our betting people aren’t going to like this matchup at all!”
Glancing up at the screen, Max saw a floating image of his head, hair and all, rotating around the center crystal.
A few seconds passed, and then his opponent’s image appeared.
The crowd went ballistic.
Next to his head was a tree-based creature. In some ways it reminded Max of the ents they had fought in the tower but more like a person and not an actual tree.
“Let’s welcome Toorg to the arena tonight! May he find a way to leaf here in one piece!”
Laughter came as a fifteen-foot walking stick moved from a box all the way up.
Max could see that Toorg was shaking even from down here, apparently not excited with the matchup that had been given to him.
For a moment he almost felt sorry for the creature, knowing how hot things were going to get.

PAT 30 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 304

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390150 2024-12-02;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1954475/chapter-304 2025-01-07;

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Nodding, Max watched the fight, surprised at how it had gone down, but he understood one could use the power of the stones scattered along the arena wall. It made sense to do what the mantis had. Dodging and weaving away from the opponent’s slower attacks, it had never let up on the constant barrage that removed chunks of the goo-based body.
The crowd laughed, watching as the shape was squished on two sides, the goo being forced out on all the edges, falling to the arena floor.

Loud boos came occasionally but stopped as their efforts did nothing to change the fight.
Moving to the place where the stone blocks had smashed the goo together, the mantis slammed a bladed claw into a pile.
Triumphantly it raised its claw, orange gel dripping from the edge.
Suddenly its claw jerked forward, right as the crowd had cheered, and a string of goo reached up from the pile on the floor.
In two seconds every bit of the orange mess that was spread around the hundred yards of the arena floor was moving, racing like arrows to the spot that had been held upward in victory a moment ago.
Max watched as the mantis slashed at the strands that were forming to the bit on its arm, cutting them, but they stuck to that blade now.
In ten seconds the blob had grown large enough to almost cover the mantis as it tried to escape, using blocks to rise upward on, only to be pulled down by the goo, tipped headfirst to the arena floor.
More and more piled on, and the flailing insect's movements slowed down as the weight of the mass pressed it into the sandy floor.
The blocks that came trying to assist got stuck inside, not penetrating like they had before.
"Well, that's new," Kauakan stated. "How do you win against that?"
"Not with stones," Max replied. "Who picks these fights?"
A whistle came from the insect next to him, and Max knew he had just snorted.
"These are supposed to be random. Tokens in a jar. If it is, that Stone Master's luck just ran out."
***
"You have been waiting for this match all night! Our final one for the evening! All the way from the slums to your arena: Ifrit!"
Shaking his head in disgust, Max moved down the stairs from his waiting area, listening to the shouts of everyone he passed. Some invisible barrier kept them back as a few pressed themselves into it, shouting things he couldn't understand over the noise.
It was a frenzy as he made his way down the hundred levels, wondering still if everyone in this ring had come out tonight just to watch him.
Kauakan had been right. There were so many different beastkin in attendance, and he saw at least twenty he had never known existed scattered amongst the crowd.
Finally at the bottom, he jumped down into the arena, easily landing on the sand below, and rolled before standing up. Picking up his staff, he had tossed down, Max moved to his spot that was marked with a big *X* like all the others had stood on.

“Ohhh… this might not be good for his opponent!”
No one knew who his opponent was, or at least Max was told it would be this way.
Each person in the stand had a small metal tablet, and he had seen them all place bets, holding up a glowing rune before wagering whatever they felt was a fair amount.
“Our betting people aren’t going to like this matchup at all!”
Glancing up at the screen, Max saw a floating image of his head, hair and all, rotating around the center crystal.
A few seconds passed, and then his opponent’s image appeared.
The crowd went ballistic.
Next to his head was a tree-based creature. In some ways it reminded Max of the ents they had fought in the tower but more like a person and not an actual tree.
“Let’s welcome Toorg to the arena tonight! May he find a way to leaf here in one piece!”
Laughter came as a fifteen-foot walking stick moved from a box all the way up.
Max could see that Toorg was shaking even from down here, apparently not excited with the matchup that had been given to him.
For a moment he almost felt sorry for the creature, knowing how hot things were going to get.

31 Chapter 305

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1959138/chapter-305 2025-01-16; Published 2024-12-16 15:00

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

saved for Mizar

Chapter 305
[20 Strength Consumed]
[20 Constitution Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
Huh… I wonder what that skill was.
Waving to the crowd, who all appeared to be applauding only because he had won them all a lot of money, Max made his way to the gate that would lead him to where he would find his companions.
So could other gods impact odds like that, or would you bet on someone controlling that matchup?

While I have nothing to bet, if I did, I would place everything on the latter. Someone wanted you to win, and tonight you did just that.
So the next fight?
A few seconds passed before Bob replied.
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Well… I guess we can't look a gift horse in the mouth.
What does that mean?
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Max waited for the other two to speak, and yet neither of them had spoken since they met him in the hallway.
Even the trip to the house they were staying had been a painful experience.
Cries came from those who were headed home, cheering for him and thanking him for their winnings.
A couple tossed some green tokens into his carriage when he passed, laughing as they did so.
Not once did Jazzjak react, even though Max could sense the fur standing on end.
Only when they closed the door the bedroom the vorpal bunny led them to, did Max finally hear what he expected.
"That was a gift, and you need to know it."
"I assumed," Max replied as the rabbit moved his chair near the bed and motioned for the two of them to sit down.
"It seems foolish," Kauakan said as he crossed his arms. "All those tokens they lost. Surely there had to be a reason."
"The next fight is the reason, and we need to prepare."
Jazzjak's nose wasn't twitching, and Max could tell he was upset.
"How bad is the next fight going to be?" Max asked, studying the creature before him, whose leg was moving so fast it was hard to keep track of.
"They are going to give you probably something right beneath a champion. Perhaps two fighters… I have seen this trick before, and it is rarely used because sometimes they do not give you a hard opponent. Sometimes they push you up to the champion with ease. That way you are not prepared for what you will really face."
"Like Sheoraoa?"
Scoffing, Jazzjak shook his head and crossed his arms.
"She was a child compared to what you will face. How you will win, I'm not certain, but if I've learned one thing, it is that you have a lot of tricks."
Does he expect me to pull a rabbit out of my hat?
Max chuckled, and he couldn't help but smile, seeing the vorpal bunny's confused look as its nose scrunched up.
"Is something funny?"
Shaking his head, Max waved off the question and stood up, moving to the center of the room, and began pacing slowly.
"If my next opponent is that strong or if I face two, then we know the plan was designed to get people to bet against me. Right?"
"Maybe… many might still bet on you. You are a smooth skin, do not forget that. Tonight, you made a very large fire out of Toorg."
"But if the next opponent is just as easy, then what? Would my third match be a guaranteed champion?"
"Not always," Jazzjak replied. He got up, moved his chair slightly so he didn't have to look over his shoulder to watch Max move. "It could be your fourth or fifth fight. It all depends on how they feel you match up. Face two strong opponents next, and you will certainly face an even stronger one next time. There are different warriors to pull from. Each one has a certain value, and you cannot or shouldn't be in a lower one."
Running his hands through his hair, Max groaned and then stopped his pacing.
"Aimee… how much longer?"

“One or two more days. That is what I was told. Her second gem was much harder on her than expected. That kind of power jump isn’t easy for someone who has never had power.”
Bobbing his head, Max began pacing again and let his mind run through the possibilities.
“How soon can I fight?”
“It’s your choice. You can fight tomorrow if you want. There will be at least one match, and if you wish to join, they will make certain everyone knows,” Jazzjak replied.
“Don’t people have jobs?”
Kauakan started laughing, his creepy laughter echoing off the larger bedroom wall.
“They do, but this happens when those jobs are not requiring one's presence,” the vorpal bunny answered. “I told you before, you have up to five days between matches. Wait longer than that, and you have to pay to not fight. Only those who have been very successful can bide their time.”
“What makes a champion fight? I never asked that.”
“Money, fame, the hope of power. Each champion you faced thought you were a chance for them to get stronger. Rarely does one need to force a champion to fight. Usually they do not fight each other, but once they do, one dies and the other promotes. This is the way it has always been.”
“Fine, set it tomorrow. I want to fight and be able to see Aimee when she returns.”
“He’s confident,” Kauakan stated as he stood up. “Exactly what we like to see.”
“Sometimes,” Jazzjak muttered. “Still, this will play in our favor either way. Whoever is making this move will believe either we know they are helping and do it again or feel we are over-confident and make a big move. Tomorrow, we shall find out, one way or another.”
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“Looks like we found out,” Kauakan muttered. “Good luck.”
Max nodded and considered the situation before him.
“Tell me this isn’t how these normally go?”
Unfortunately his Sonar skill told him exactly how his companion felt and thought. While his face rarely changed, the vibrations coming from him was how he shook anytime he was scared.
Max doubted most would be able to sense it, but he could.
“Seven fighters. Why would they do such a thing? So much life to be lost.”
Considering his options, Max waited, knowing he was going to be called in a moment, expected to walk down the stairs and onto a place where sand and stone would soon be covered in a variety of different colors of blood.
Bob, I need advice. You know what we can do. Even if I give over to you, do we really have a chance?
You don’t give yourself enough credit. While I might be a better fighter, there are still paths that would allow you to win this. The question comes down to how much we reveal of what you can do.
Right now, I think we play into your strength. They believe you are a fire or elemental specialist. I see a way to make this work, but you would have to be willing to go through with something we can only surprise them with once.
Max could sense the thought of Bob, chuckling at the idea his skill had.
If I don’t do that, how many skills would we reveal the other way?
Most of them.
Very well. I’ll follow your plan.
“Kauakan, I want to make sure I’m right. The rules state that when the drums start, one can cast spells that don’t impact anyone but the caster. Right?”
The insect nodded slowly, cocking his head to the side as he did.
“Yes… you have seen it a few times, but most do not have spells that actively assist them. Typically they are abilities, as none are worthwhile of a power when compared to a true combat ability.”

Smiling, Max nodded.
“How long will they wait to ring the bells after the drums? It’s usually about twenty seconds.”
“It can vary, but yes, it is usually that.”
“Okay. It’s time to have some fun.”
***
“Wow! You all appear to be in a frantic betting frenzy! It would appear that someone is expected to die first, and in a horrible way! Let’s see how those wagers work out as we prepare to watch an exciting battle royale!”
Max couldn’t help but grin, ignoring the fact that the other seven opponents were all staring at him.
Two large lionkin, both almost ten feet tall and with large manes, swung their axes as they cracked their necks. Each one was glaring at him and snarling.
Someone has to have paid them to focus on me, or we are just too attractive with a full head of hair.
A larger version of Kauakan was closest, easily twelve feet tall, and his bladed claws looked like they could do some real damage.
A pair of lizard fighters and a sixteen-foot-tall bearkin who made the insect look tiny, holding a huge metal shield and a sword at least seven feet long, were to Max’s right.
Finally, the last opponent, furthest away was a vorpal bunny.
The red glint in its eyes and the way its nose twitched said nothing about it was cute and cuddly. One could not ignore the black armor it wore, which hid its white fur, or the myriad of small weapons stuck in sheaths all over its tiny body.
“Hold your breaths! I have just been informed they are putting up a stronger barrier! It would appear we expect a large amount of chaos to come!”
Shimmering all around the top of the walls and about forty feet into the air above them, Max watched as a blue glow and then a white one covered them all.
Once it was done, the volume of the crowd lessened, but Max could see the antics of some closest to the wall. Not a single spectator was silent.
The drums sounded, and Max counted to three.
He then waved his staff around for show, his fire familiar appearing by his side.
“What’s this?! Ifrit has conjured a familiar! Who would have thought?! You all know that means it’s going to get hot in there!”
Smiling, Max slid his hand into his robe, pulling out the glass dagger, and cut his hand, dripping blood onto the top of his familiar, watching each of his opponents as they gripped their weapons and all looked ready to pounce.
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17.
Now.
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Bob’s plan was so amazing he felt bad that his skill didn’t want to take over.
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As the world shifted and slowed down, multicolored glass filling the space around him, Max dismissed his familiar and watched as it slowly began to fade away.
Once more the kaleidoscope view of the world almost made him feel ready to vomit, but he overcame it. He was much stronger now, and yet it seemed to hit him harder.
The cut in his hand went from a few drops to a fountain, spraying into the air, once more creating a pattern before him.
Black and red orbs tore from his chest and mixed with his blood and the symbol, and when it did, flames ignited, turning it into a floating rune.
A black and purple portal appeared, this one much larger than the only other time he had used this spell, and once again long nails forced the line apart, widening as it grew until it tore open.
Before Max was a portal now about twenty-seven feet tall, and from it strode a demon with red skin with veins that surged with what could have been lava, and

flames traveling along its skin. Dark claws shook as the demon strode through the portal and stood before Max.
It glanced around the arena and began to laugh.
“It would appear you have grown… and traveled to a new world. Impressive. Tell me, have you summoned me to slaughter everyone here? I am not certain that is possible, as I can sense a few beyond both of us very close.”
“On the floor with us or in this arena?”
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The demon shuddered, standing there, lava-like flames dripping from its body, sending a few drops that never touched the sand, and yet it acted like it was ecstatic.
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“These seven. Four bells will sound. Kill them all.”
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“And then?”
“Immediately go. I do not want you to risk your life. Once they are dead, I am not certain how things will change.”
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“Time to harvest some souls.”

PAT 31 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 305

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390148 2024-12-02;
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1959138/chapter-305 2025-01-07;

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“On the floor with us or in this arena?”

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“Tell me, what is the contract?”
“These seven. Four bells will sound. Kill them all.”
Laughter came, and the demon clapped both hands together, another portal appearing before it. It reached inside, pulling out two swords, each fifteen feet long, blacker than night and yet covered in a black flame that seemed to suck the very light around it.
“And then?”
“Immediately go. I do not want you to risk your life. Once they are dead, I am not certain how things will change.”
An evil grin appeared, and a forked tongue darted from the demon’s mouth.
“Time to harvest some souls.”

32 Chapter 306

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1961003/chapter-306 2025-01-16;

Chapter 306
“Stand here,” Max said as he pointed to the spot his elemental had been at. “I’m going to pretend to be tired. Don’t worry, if someone makes it past you, I’ll be fine.”
Taking a step and turning, the demon grunted.
“None shall pass.”
Time stayed frozen as Max waited, wondering why they were still waiting.
“Tell me, what is your name?”
A grunt came, and Max saw the demon shake its head.
“You should make that part of the bargain next time. Now it is too late. But fear not, I know who you are. None shall know my secret, and when I return to my home, I shall count the seconds until you summon me again.”
The rainbowed glass shattered, and the world returned to normal.
“WHAT IN THE—”
Four bells rang, and the sound of the announcer was cut off.
Max dropped to one knee, clutching his staff, holding on to it like he couldn’t stand at all.

His actions didn’t seem to matter because the seven opponents who were prepared to charge, froze at the sight of the demon before them.
Unlike the seven, the demon didn’t hesitate.
Max couldn’t believe how fast it moved, its black swords cutting down two in a heartbeat, each step it took bringing it to the next. As it moved away from him, he noticed the wings on the demon's back, folded, another secret for another day.
Four were down before the first reacted, and as the vorpal bunny vanished, a sword cut through the air, chunks of flesh suddenly appearing a few yards away, two ears flopping into the sand.
Less than ten seconds.
Max didn’t even really count but knew that was all the time it took for all seven to die.
Even the insect that was closest to him hadn’t moved.
It crossed both bladed arms, trying to stop the black blade that came down upon it, his body flashing a color before the blade hit.
A cry came as both legs snapped, shoved into the stone beneath its feet.
The second sword came, and there were no blades to block them.
It had lowered them, or perhaps they had fallen on their own.
A crunch came, purple blood splattering everywhere as the sword squished a bug beneath it.
“Go,” Max whispered, sensing already the presence coming.
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The sound of metal on metal was deafening, almost as if Max had put his ear next to the anvil and someone hit it with a hammer.
Igarra was there, a giant axe colliding with both swords that were raised in a block, knocking the fleeing demon into the portal, laughter coming as it began to close.
A flood of notifications were waiting, and his body was alive.
Suddenly his body gave out for a second, and he had to grab on to the staff and really hold himself in place, his muscles feeling like they had just broken for a moment.
As soon as it had happened it was gone, and his body tingled with power.
It took everything Max had to not dance for joy and check out each of them, but the moment his demon was gone, Igarra was before him, axe leveled at his face.
“WHAT WAS THAT?!”
“A demon. I—”
“I KNOW IT WAS A DEMON! HOW?!”
Pretending to still be recovering, Max used the staff and stood, his eyes never leaving the axe before him and knowing that one wrong move could cost him everything.
“A bargain… I made… I wasn’t sure if I would live or die, but I knew that if I didn’t risk it, death was almost certain here today.”
“It still might be!” Igarra exclaimed.
Her head snapped in every direction, and Max could hear the crowd.
Ifrit! Ifrit! Ifrit!
A low growl came, and the golden lizard who towered above him glared.
“You are lucky… so lucky… we shall talk, and it will not go well for you if I think for a moment you are lying. Do you understand?”
Max nodded and finally stood tall, still leaning slightly against his staff.
“I will answer your questions.”
She snorted, her nostrils flaring for a moment.
Her axe vanished, and Max watched as the barrier that had been surrounding the arena faded away.
The noise of the crowd felt like an assault.
Every part of his body could sense the vibrations of their stomping feet and their voices.
Ifrit! Ifrit! Ifrit!
Igarra snapped her fingers, and the place went quiet.

Max felt his own vocal cords feel tight, yet if he tried, he knew he could still manage to say something, even if it squeaked.
“I hear your cheers!” she shouted, moving to where Max was and grabbing the hand that appeared to be not using the staff as much, yanking him upright.
He feigned a little bit of weakness, moving the staff quickly, and let himself be lifted up, almost to his tiptoes.
“Ifrit told me he had made a pact and took a gamble, risking his life with that demon! As you saw it was stronger than even our winner today and seemed content to secure victory for him. It is a shame that we shall never see it again.”
Max could hear her tone change at those last six words.
“Now cheer for your champion a few more times! It would appear he needs to get some rest!”
She let go of his hand, and Max pitched forward, selling the part as best he could, believing in that moment he deserved the Acting skill.
The crowd called out his name for what seemed like forever, and finally he was forced to leave, directed by a gold-scaled hand that pointed to where Kauakan waited at the entrance of the tunnel.
“We shall talk soon.”
Max nodded and made his way across the arena floor, going slower than usual and using his staff a little bit.
Each step felt lighter as Max kept the laughter he wanted to let out inside.
A long list of notifications vied for his attention, but until he was back at the house, safe and secure, he wanted to focus on his act.
Not once did the watchful eyes of Igarra ever leave his back.
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Once again, the ride home had been in silence.
Max could feel that both of his companions were unsure how to react, giving him a little more space than usual as the pair huddled almost together on one side of the carriage.
They followed him to his room, neither saying a word as he motioned to the bed, watching as the pair sat in silence.
“Go ahead, I know you have questions.”
“No… I have no questions. You… that demon… we have…”
Kauakan’s brain seemed to not work as his words came and went.
Even the vorpal rabbit sat there in silence still, his nose scrunched more than ever.
“She didn’t kill you,” Jazzjak finally said in the unending silence. “I thought she might, but she didn’t. The crowd… It was silent as you fought… or I mean as that demon fought. You could have heard a pebble hit the stone, even with everyone there. No one could take their eyes off the carnage we witnessed. You… you will be a legend, and I’m not certain what will happen next.”
“What do you mean?” Max asked, crossing his arms and moving closer.
Both leaned a little back, shifting on the bed.
“You… Seven fighters died. Good fighters. The one like me… he could kill me before I knew I was dead, and still…”
It was comical when Jazzjak snapped his fingers, the sound muted by the fur.
“I’m not sure a champion would face you from here. Even if offered the chance now. Two might be willing, but even then…”
“Another problem for another day. For now, let’s focus on what we can control. Aimee comes back tomorrow?”
Slowly the rabbit nodded.
“She should. If she was able to witness that, I’m not certain… that was… terrifying.”
“It was like Igarra herself had come!” Kauakan exclaimed, wincing when a furry elbow hit him in the side. “What?! It’s true, and you know it!”
The pink nose moved for a few seconds before Jazzjak bobbed his head.
“That is why none may be willing to fight you. No one knows what you are capable of. Even Igarra.”

“I’ll deal with that problem when the time comes. I mean, what’s one more powerful person hunting?”
Kauakan grunted and then began to chuckle, and soon he was making his unusual laugh again.
A few seconds passed before Jazzjak joined in, and for a bit all three of them laughed.
“Ok, you two need to go. I’m tired and really need to sleep. That took a lot out of me.”
Both were off the bed and across the room in a moment.
“I’ll bring food in the morning,” Kauakan stated as they left the room.
With them finally gone, Max turned to what he had waited to read.
[20 Intelligence Consumed]
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[Stat Milestone 2 Reached]
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[Bonus damage granted + 50% melee damage]
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[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Axe - Rare has been upgraded to Axe - Epic]
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Wait a second. Did that insect really have a strength over five hundred?
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PAT 32 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 306

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390145 2024-12-03;

"Stand here," Max said as he pointed to the spot his elemental had been at. "I'm going to pretend to be tired. Don't worry, if someone makes it past you, I'll be fine."

Taking a step and turning, the demon grunted.

“None shall pass.”

Time stayed frozen as Max waited, wondering why they were still waiting.

“Tell me, what is your name?”

A grunt came, and Max saw the demon shake its head.

“You should make that part of the bargain next time. Now it is too late. But fear not, I know who you are. None shall know my secret, and when I return to my home, I shall count the seconds until you summon me again.”

The rainbowed glass shattered, and the world returned to normal.

“WHAT IN THE—”

Four bells rang, and the sound of the announcer was cut off.

Max dropped to one knee, clutching his staff, holding on to it like he couldn’t stand at all.

His actions didn’t seem to matter because the seven opponents who were prepared to charge, froze at the sight of the demon before them.

Unlike the seven, the demon didn’t hesitate.

Max couldn’t believe how fast it moved, its black swords cutting down two in a heartbeat, each step it took bringing it to the next. As it moved away from him, he noticed the wings on the demon's back, folded, another secret for another day.

Four were down before the first reacted, and as the vorpal bunny vanished, a sword cut through the air, chunks of flesh suddenly appearing a few yards away, two ears flopping into the sand.

Less than ten seconds.

Max didn’t even really count but knew that was all the time it took for all seven to die.

Even the insect that was closest to him hadn’t moved.

It crossed both bladed arms, trying to stop the black blade that came down upon it, his body flashing a color before the blade hit.

A cry came as both legs snapped, shoved into the stone beneath its feet.

The second sword came, and there were no blades to block them.

It had lowered them, or perhaps they had fallen on their own.

A crunch came, purple blood splattering everywhere as the sword squished a bug beneath it.

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“I’ll bring food in the morning,” Kauakan stated as they left the room.

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[Base and Bonus Stat Check]

*****

Max Hoste

18-Year-old Human Male

Level 1

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DEX: 445 + 476

CON: 469 + 497

INT: 331 + 373

WIS: 314 + 358

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Wait a second. Did that insect really have a strength over five hundred?

It did… which means what we are about to face must also hit like you do. The fact the hunter felt cocky and let us

keep a few pieces of equipment is what allows us to stay above these opponents.

If we were naked…

We'd die…

33 Chapter 307

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1962627/chapter-307 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 307
[Milestone Upgrade Still Pending]
Trying not to sigh, Max waited anxiously in the chair of the dining room.
He could tell Kauakan was anxious at well, but it was a different vibe he detected.
The insect had barely eaten the plate of raw meat before him, usually having consumed it within a minute.
"Nervous?"
Tapping the bladed claw against the metal plated, Kauakan bobbed his head.
"If Jazzjak is correct, the dynamics are going to change in our group. She may treat me as I had treated her."
"Like a red-headed stepchild?"
The bug cocked his head and stared for a few seconds at Max.
"I'm not certain what that means, but based on our conversation I would most likely say yes. While you protected her from me, I do not have that same agreement, and as such she can act without fear. I would—"
"Don't worry about that," Max stated, pushing his plate of fruit and vegetables away. "I won't allow it."
Bowing low, Kauakan made a sound Max knew was a sigh and then dug into the food, apparently no longer concerned for his impending doom.
As they waited, time passed, and finally the metal door to the room swung open, and both men jumped to their feet.
Max saw Aimee with his eyes, but what he felt from his Sonar was an aura that radiated from around her.
Even Jazzjak moved differently, staying behind her, not leaving his back to the improved lizard.
"Aimee!"
He moved toward her, and she held up her hand and shook her head.
"Please don't. I am still sore and not recovered yet. I need a few more days."
Her tone had changed, and Max wondered if she had changed.
Gone was a gaze he once saw when they were alone. Now it was an expression of stone. Almost none of her usual facial muscles moved or twitched. Even her nostrils were steady.
"I understand. How was it? Did you get everything you hoped for?"
The faintest crack came in her facade as she nodded, lips that almost formed a smile before they returned to her new look.

“I did. Thank you for that. I’ll never be able to repay you for what you have done.”
Motioning toward one of the chairs, Max moved to pull it out.
“Please don’t. I can’t stay. Jazzjak will tell you more, but I wanted to tell you thank you in person. But now… I must go. All my life I have dreamed of what I have now, and if I stay by your side, I may never be able to acquire what I truly desire.”
Pain like a knife stuck into his gut for a moment, and Max turned, nodding as he tried to read the one he had called a friend now leaving as if they were nothing more than passing acquaintances.
“You’re certain?”
“It is our way. With power comes opportunities, and I have waited my whole life for this moment.”
She moved toward him, her gait different, confident, strong, and steady.
Bowing just a few inches, her eyes never left him.
She is a predator now. For the first time in her eyes she sees you as they all do. Someone that can kill her in a moment and take away everything she holds dear.
And yet I would never do that.
Max, you can say that all you want to them, but inside, each of them is feral to a degree. Does a person in your world hope to find an injured wolf and nurse it back to health, expecting it to no longer be a wolf? No, they know it will always be a wolf. It will always have desires, and if they ever give it the chance to act like one and are weak before it, the wolf will strike.
Bending his neck just a tad, Max returned the gesture.
“Thank you for guiding me here, Aimee. I wish you the best.”
“You are welcome, but please, from now on call me Kouarta.”
He felt in the translation what her new name meant and was barely able to keep from frowning.
The destroyer of weakness.
She glanced at Kauakan, who hadn’t moved from behind the table. Smirking, she turned and strode from the room, walking past Jazzjak, who shut the door behind her.
“Did you know?”
“About what she just did? No, but I guess I expected it,” the vorpal rabbit replied as he moved to an empty chair at the small wooden table. “She is a hunter. She always has been but never had the tools or power to hunt. I fear for those who she finds victims.”
“And you can’t tell me what ability or skills she has now?”
Hopping onto the chair and letting his feet dangle above the ground, Jazzjak shook his head.
“I took an oath. Just like I will keep mine with you and Kauakan, I will not break it.”
Frustration and pain overtook the joy he had been feeling for a bit.
Gone was the excitement and anticipation he had been looking forward to upon reconnecting with Aimee, or Kouarta.
“This is the way it is,” Kauakan stated as he sat back down before his empty plate. “I left those I knew in my ring just as she did now. There is no turning back. Her path is one that will end in death of others or herself.”
Pounding his fist on the table, Max winced when it cracked the solid wooden piece almost in half.
“I’m sorry… I shouldn’t have done that.”
Chuckling, Jazzjak shook his head and shrugged.
“No one would think you have done anything wrong. Channel that anger and pain. Use it in the next fight.”
With his plans to spend time with Aimee gone, Max grunted and pulled his chair out, dropping into it.
“Tell them I’m ready.”
“Are you sure?”
Nodding, Max ran his finger along the crack he had just made, feeling the wood. If he wanted he could mend it, but he chose not to.

There are still some secrets I must keep. Especially if others are this quick to abandon me so fast.
“I am. There is no point waiting. I need to unleash what is inside.”
***
“You’ve been quiet. Why?”
Kauakan didn’t look away from the window in their box, watching the crowd that continued to stream into the arena.
Max saw the same thing. Every seat was full this time, and there were others packed in along the walls, some sitting on laps of others. There were new people near him, and others that had been in the same seats each fight were gone. He could even see children with what Max assumed were the parents, all pointing at the arena and looking excited.
It’s like they are about to go to the zoo or see some magic show…
Except instead they have come to watch someone die.
“This is the greatest fight of your life. Everything you have prepared for, everything I have dreamed of will either happen or fail in a few minutes. Standing here, watching all of this, I’m not afraid like I thought I might be.”
Kauakan turned and bowed before Max.
“May you consume the enemy they place before you, and I pray to my god that you will be able to grow strong enough to return home.”
“I won’t lose,” Max stated as his last companion returned upright.
“There is no doubt about that. That is why I am not afraid.”
Both of them chuckled and focused on the crowd before them.
He is right. Do you still wish to fight, or shall I take over?
No… this is on me. I need to win this.
***
“Some have lost everything, while others have risen to new heights! While you might not like him, Ifrit has torched generational wealth and ignited desires within many of your loins!”
Groaning as the announcer continued what felt like a five-minute introduction, Max focused on the arena floor. His opponent would be announced once he was at the bottom.
“Two more lines, and then you can start walking.”
Max nodded at the tigerkin who stood with their hand out, glancing at a metal tablet that displayed a language he couldn’t read.
“So put your claws, paws, and whatever else you have together and cheer for our newest rising CHAMPIOOONNNN!”
A large pause came as the crowd started to roar, chanting his name.
“IIIIIIIIIFRRRIIIIIIIIIIT!”
The tigerkin motioned with their claw, and Max started down the steps, leaving the small box, and as he exited the stone tunnel to the first one, the crowd’s cheers and shouting hit him like a gust of wind.
Part of him hurt to see the rabid excitement in the eyes of everyone next to his long path of stairs. What was even worse was the younger beastkin and insects who seemed more excited than most of the adults.
Steel yourself. Use that pain. Use the anger. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Fowl, Batrire, Cordellia, and Tanila are waiting on you. This is what you must do to return to them.
Max felt his face change. It mimicked the one he had seen on Aimee’s face. Knowing she had changed, it hurt even more, and his face became harder, a snarl almost appearing as his lip curled slightly.
As his face showed up like that on the floating crystal, the volume of the arena became louder.
***
The shield was set around the arena, and Max didn’t pay any heed to it.
Instead, every bit of his attention was focused on the woman before him.

So many times the idea of killing a woman had been foreign. It wasn’t easy. His mother had raised him a certain way, and now it didn’t matter who or what they were.
All that mattered was they wanted him dead, and he wouldn’t hesitate to stop them.
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“Sheemena, are you ready?!”
The roar she let out sent waves of pressure, and Max almost smiled, wondering if she had used a form of intimidation as he felt the dredges of something trying to affect him.
Banging her red sword and red shield together twice, she lifted them high and roared once more.
“Ifrit, are you ready?!”
Waving his staff in the air, not releasing fireworks or anything else, Max never moved from his slightly bent position.
“Let the drums of battle sound!”
The moment they rang out, Max summoned his fire familiar, listening to the roar of the crowds, and he could feel pressure coming from the box where Igarra was sitting.
No longer did the curtain that was usually there hang.
Today she was on full display, sitting alone on a white stone throne, her gold scales shimmering in the light.
When Max didn’t do anything else, the crowd let out a groan, obviously hoping for another show.
Even the yellow eyes of his opponent had widened slightly, as if she were unsure of what might come next.
Bob… thanks.
We do not have time for this. Focus.
Seconds ticked by as both fighters waited on the bells to sound.
I know. Still. I would be remiss if I didn’t tell you thank you for helping me.
If you want to thank me then let me have control; otherwise, stop this prattling.
Unable to help himself, Max laughed out loud, his body shaking and his smile growing.
The crowd’s cheering increased as they could only wonder at what was going to take place next.
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PAT 33 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 307

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390142 2024-12-03;

[Milestone Upgrade Still Pending]

Trying not to sigh, Max waited anxiously in the chair of the dining room.

He could tell Kauakan was anxious at well, but it was a different vibe he detected.

The insect had barely eaten the plate of raw meat before him, usually having consumed it within a minute.

“Nervous?”

Tapping the bladed claw against the metal plated, Kauakan bobbed his head.

“If Jazzjak is correct, the dynamics are going to change in our group. She may treat me as I had treated her.”

“Like a red-headed stepchild?”

The bug cocked his head and stared for a few seconds at Max.

“I’m not certain what that means, but based on our conversation I would most likely say yes. While you protected her from me, I do not have that same agreement, and as such she can act without fear. I would—”

“Don’t worry about that,” Max stated, pushing his plate of fruit and vegetables away. “I won’t allow it.”

Bowing low, Kauakan made a sound Max knew was a sigh and then dug into the food, apparently no longer concerned for his impending doom.

As they waited, time passed, and finally the metal door to the room swung open, and both men jumped to their feet.

Max saw Aimee with his eyes, but what he felt from his Sonar was an aura that radiated from around her.

Even Jazzjak moved differently, staying behind her, not leaving his back to the improved lizard.

“Aimee!”

He moved toward her, and she held up her hand and shook her head.

“Please don’t. I am still sore and not recovered yet. I need a few more days.”

Her tone had changed, and Max wondered if she had changed.

Gone was a gaze he once saw when they were alone. Now it was an expression of stone. Almost none of her usual facial muscles moved or twitched. Even her nostrils were steady.

“I understand. How was it? Did you get everything you hoped for?”

The faintest crack came in her facade as she nodded, lips that almost formed a smile before they returned to her new look.

“I did. Thank you for that. I’ll never be able to repay you for what you have done.”

Motioning toward one of the chairs, Max moved to pull it out.

“Please don’t. I can’t stay. Jazzjak will tell you more, but I wanted to tell you thank you in person. But now… I must go. All my life I have dreamed of what I have now, and if I stay by your side, I may never be able to acquire what I truly desire.”

Pain like a knife stuck into his gut for a moment, and Max turned, nodding as he tried to read the one he had called a friend now leaving as if they were nothing more than passing acquaintances.

“You’re certain?”

“It is our way. With power comes opportunities, and I have waited my whole life for this moment.”

She moved toward him, her gait different, confident, strong, and steady.

Bowing just a few inches, her eyes never left him.

She is a predator now. For the first time in her eyes she sees you as they all do. Someone that can kill her in a moment and take away everything she holds dear.

And yet I would never do that.

Max, you can say that all you want to them, but inside, each of them is feral to a degree. Does a person in your world hope to find an injured wolf and nurse it back to health, expecting it to no longer be a wolf? No, they know it will always be a wolf. It will always have desires, and if they

ever give it the chance to act like one and are weak before it, the wolf will strike.

Bending his neck just a tad, Max returned the gesture.

“Thank you for guiding me here, Aimee. I wish you the best.”

“You are welcome, but please, from now on call me Kouarta.”

He felt in the translation what her new name meant and was barely able to keep from frowning.

The destroyer of weakness.

She glanced at Kauakan, who hadn’t moved from behind the table. Smirking, she turned and strode from the room, walking past Jazzjak, who shut the door behind her.

“Did you know?”

“About what she just did? No, but I guess I expected it,” the vorpal rabbit replied as he moved to an empty chair at the small wooden table. “She is a hunter. She always has been but never had the tools or power to hunt. I fear for those who she finds victims.”

“And you can’t tell me what ability or skills she has now?”

Hopping onto the chair and letting his feet dangle above the ground, Jazzjak shook his head.

“I took an oath. Just like I will keep mine with you and Kauakan, I will not break it.”

Frustration and pain overtook the joy he had been feeling for a bit.

Gone was the excitement and anticipation he had been looking forward to upon reconnecting with Aimee, or Kouarta.

“This is the way it is,” Kauakan stated as he sat back down before his empty plate. “I left those I knew in my ring just as she did now. There is no turning back. Her path is one that will end in death of others or herself.”

Pounding his fist on the table, Max winced when it cracked the solid wooden piece almost in half.

“I’m sorry… I shouldn’t have done that.”

Chuckling, Jazzjak shook his head and shrugged.

“No one would think you have done anything wrong. Channel that anger and pain. Use it in the next fight.”

With his plans to spend time with Aimee gone, Max grunted and pulled his chair out, dropping into it.

“Tell them I’m ready.”

“Are you sure?”

Nodding, Max ran his finger along the crack he had just made, feeling the wood. If he wanted he could mend it, but he chose not to.

There are still some secrets I must keep. Especially if others are this quick to abandon me so fast.

“I am. There is no point waiting. I need to unleash what is inside.”

***

“You’ve been quiet. Why?”

Kauakan didn’t look away from the window in their box, watching the crowd that continued to stream into the arena.

Max saw the same thing. Every seat was full this time, and there were others packed in along the walls, some sitting on laps of others. There were new people near him, and others that had been in the same seats each fight were gone. He could even see children with what Max assumed were the parents, all pointing at the arena and looking excited.

It’s like they are about to go to the zoo or see some magic show…

Except instead they have come to watch someone die.

“This is the greatest fight of your life. Everything you have prepared for, everything I have dreamed of will either happen or fail in a few minutes. Standing here, watching all of this, I’m not afraid like I thought I might be.”

Kauakan turned and bowed before Max.

“May you consume the enemy they place before you, and I pray to my god that you will be able to grow strong enough to return home.”

“I won’t lose,” Max stated as his last companion returned upright.

“There is no doubt about that. That is why I am not afraid.”

Both of them chuckled and focused on the crowd before them.

He is right. Do you still wish to fight, or shall I take over?

No… this is on me. I need to win this.

***

“Some have lost everything, while others have risen to new heights! While you might not like him, Ifrit has torched generational wealth and ignited desires within many of your loins!”

Groaning as the announcer continued what felt like a five-minute introduction, Max focused on the arena floor. His opponent would be announced once he was at the bottom.

“Two more lines, and then you can start walking.”

Max nodded at the tigerkin who stood with their hand out, glancing at a metal tablet that displayed a language he couldn’t read.

“So put your claws, paws, and whatever else you have together and cheer for our newest rising CHAMPIOOONNNN!”

A large pause came as the crowd started to roar, chanting his name.

“IIIIIIIIIFRRRIIIIIIIIIIT!”

The tigerkin motioned with their claw, and Max started down the steps, leaving the small box, and as he exited the stone tunnel to the first one, the crowd’s cheers and shouting hit him like a gust of wind.

Part of him hurt to see the rabid excitement in the eyes of everyone next to his long path of stairs. What was even worse was the

younger beastkin and insects who seemed more excited than most of the adults.

Steel yourself. Use that pain. Use the anger. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Fowl, Batrire, Cordellia, and Tanila are waiting on you. This is what you must do to return to them.

Max felt his face change. It mimicked the one he had seen on Aimee's face. Knowing she had changed, it hurt even more, and his face became harder, a snarl almost appearing as his lip curled slightly.

As his face showed up like that on the floating crystal, the volume of the arena became louder.

***

The shield was set around the arena, and Max didn't pay any heed to it.

Instead, every bit of his attention was focused on the woman before him.

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34 Chapter 308

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1964262/chapter-308 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM AUTHOR_NAME

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DJFVT8Z4]

Chapter 308
Sheemena didn't charge forward like all the other opponents had.
Like Max she stood there, legs bent and ready as each waited to see who would move first and what openings might come.
The crowd still roared with excitement, but it was muted. The shield cut down on the noise, and the two of them slowly started to circle one another, twenty yards between them being nothing more than a single step.
"Do you want to die fast or slow?"
A snarl came from Sheemena, her fangs showing as her lips pulled away.
"I will skin you and make a rug from your smooth hide!" she shouted, still not moving forward. "Do you think so highly of yourself?! You are nothing!"
Max stopped moving. When he did, his opponent froze, bending lower and holding the circular shield before her chest, sword ready to defend or attack.
Driving his staff into the ground, Max smirked and grabbed his robe with both hands. It tore in half, sliding off his body as he appeared to emerge from a cocoon.
Underneath it was no armor. Just his tanned flesh, darker than usual from the amount of sun he had experienced in the desert.
Strapped across his chest were two belts, dozens of small daggers wedged into tiny sheaths.
A confused look came upon Sheemena's face as she watched Max.
He looked defenseless, but she knew he had skills. She had seen his fights before and been told by many what he had done.
Speculation about all that he could do ran wild, but there was never a mention that he could control sand or stone.
The weapons she saw looked different from all the others. They were not dark black. Instead, they were clear.
"Truth be told," Max said as he yanked on each of the leather belts with a hand, the pieces separating from a seam upon his shoulders. "I've always wanted a lion fur rug."
Sheemena didn't wait.
Flashing green, she dashed forward, weapon flashing red, aiming for Max, who was standing behind his staff.
Whatever skill Sheemena activated was cut short as the staff she ran into didn't budge.
A thud sounded from the impact of her shield and the staff.
Max had backed up just a few steps, out of reach of her sword that swung and wiffed badly.
He watched as she staggered backward, eyes blinking rapidly.
"Let's begin this lesson," Max growled, tossing the belts into the air.
Twenty-four daggers flew from the leather prisons, each one sparkling clear in the air, except for a stone that was set in the middle of the blade, perfectly placed so that they were still balanced and able to be controlled.
Ever since the first one was made, Max worked on finding a way to make one he could control, and his weapon skill lent him the knowledge he needed.
Sheemena backed up, shield held slightly higher as her eyes tracked the blades that began to fan out, surrounding her.

Two different circles formed, each one with twelve daggers that rotated in opposite directions.
Her head snapped in each direction, yellow eyes landing on Max, who stood behind his staff that was still stuck in the sand.
He laughed as the lionkin spotted the truth about his staff.
The impact of her charge had knocked the sand he had placed it upon away.
It had not been buried. Even now his staff was floating slightly above the dark sand.
“Wood? Stone? How?!”
Her questions didn’t matter because Max was ready to demonstrate what he could do.
He could feel the eyes of every creature in the stands. Each one was locked on him, and he figured not a single one cared about Sheemena.
Even better was the sensation of knowing Igarra had a front row seat to him displaying yet another power none could fathom or believe he had.
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The daggers moved, coming in like a swarm of bees from every angle and height.
Sheemena’s body flashed green, and while she managed to stop a large number of the daggers, even managing to break five of them, she lost the fight in an instant as nine blades slid into the different parts of her body from behind.
Each calf, and hamstring found a six-inch blade buried inside, cutting through the metal with ease.
Her lower back, shoulders, and triceps found the same fate as each felt the sting of his new weapons pierce her defenses.
She roared with pain, and this time Max didn’t doubt for a moment that she had used an Intimidation skill as waves of pressure assaulted him.
Trying to move toward him as she yelled, Sheemena watched as the wooden staff cut her off, pinning her against the stone blades and the staff.
“Let me show you how it really sounds,” Max called out.
[Intimidation]
Her eyes seemed to go dull for a moment as his shout washed over her, and without waiting for a response, Max drove his staff harder, the long edge sliding under the shield and weapon that had blocked it, pressing against her waist.
Pinched between all these things, Max sent the rest of his daggers into her, sticking in from the front side, making sure each limb and the torso had one inside.
Then, like an arrow, she launched upward from the arena floor until she slammed into the shield above.
Ninety feet? One hundred?
He wasn’t sure, just that it was high.
Control of the staff and daggers was difficult, and he had tested it once, knowing this was the limit of his ability.
Unable to truly hear the crowd, Max spun around, waving his hands upward as if calling for their voices, and he could see and now hear them over the muffling of the barrier.
Dropping his arms down, he brought Sheemena down headfirst, her arms fighting against his weapons, letting the daggers pierce deeper into her body as she raced toward the ground.
She flashed a color just before impact, and the sound of her body hitting one of the stone tiles in the floor made a crunching noise.
A groan came, pained for certain.
She flashed a color, and Max wondered what she could be doing now. Her body looked broken, and so much red blood stained the stone.
Cracking came, and Max sensed the shifting of his weapons.
No, the daggers were the sound of the cracking. The stones he could feel were being pushed from the lioness’s body.
Max watched as her body began to grow.
KILL HER NOW!

Moving with everything he had, Max raced toward her, seeing her lift her head as he reached her in a heartbeat, swinging his fist.
[Power Strike]
[Festering Touch]
[Weakness]
[Rampage]
[Magical Strike]
[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Attack]
With a speed that he couldn't see, even though it was his own hand, Max's fist struck her three times, right in the head, and each blow that connected knocked the head downward into the stone.
Her body flashed black, and then the claw of hers that had been holding the sword, but were not letting her push upward came at him, moving with almost the same speed of the attack he had just used.
It hit him right in the leg, sending him flying across the arena floor until he crashed into the wall.
[Regeneration]
Pain filled him. His leg was broken, and he knew it was starting to mend together, but as he staggered to stand, Max watched as the lioness roared.
Half of her head was missing.
The green circlet was gone, and as Sheemena or whatever she was stood there, hunched partially over, the one eye that still worked locked onto Max.
"Time to die…"
Her voice carried across that distance, barely faster than she had been.
Now the lioness stood twenty-three feet tall, and every part of her was bristling with muscles that seemed impossible to house on that frame.
The claws on her hand were each a foot long, and there was no doubt how sharp they were.
As she charged, Max summoned the stone wall, the ice wall, the air wall, each one placed in her path, trying to trip her or slow her down as he pressed against the stone wall to stand.
Both the stone wall and ice wall shattered against her legs, the air wall catching her face slightly and knocking her just a little bit upward, but it too was gone in a moment, unable to withstand her power.
Every stone block that was within his range came racing like arrows, pelting her body, armor now gone and nothing but dark orange fur covering the beast that sought his death.
Sheemena used her arms to swat away the blocks, shattering them into dust, none of them withstanding the power she possessed.
His Ice Nova was preparing, just about ready to cast as the lioness reached him.
Both claws came in a slashing attack, aiming to shred him like paper.
[Demonic Teleportation]
Ten long grooves were set in the stone as he vanished, appearing behind her in a last-ditch attack.
His staff came at her from behind.
Its tip had been cut, trimmed to a fine point. No longer was it blunt, as in all the other matches.
She turned as the weapon came, trying to find where Max had gone, the staff piercing her side and burying itself within her back.
Sheemena howled with pain as she felt the six-foot staff in her side and back, wedged within her muscles and flesh.
Those yellow eyes locked on Max, who was almost able to stand as normal, his broken leg almost now healed.
As she turned to come at him, Max had an ice spear forming, growing it as fast as he could.

Both of her feet pressed off the ground, jumping at him, aimed once more to take Max's life.
His staff, still wedged inside her, was sent upward, carrying her body higher than intended, missing her target by a dozen yards, landing awkwardly as the staff fought against her.
Blinking, Max watched as she reached around her own side and started slashing at her skin with a few claws, forcing Sheemena backward a few steps as his weapon pulled against her flesh and skin. He felt it burst free as the muscle and hide that had imprisoned it was torn loose.
Trying to summon it back, Max felt it not moving, seeing the bloody and crazed lioness holding his staff in her clenched fist.
"No more!"
His leg was healed, he could stand, and the pain was gone, but Max knew at this moment everything was going to come down to the next few seconds.
I need help.
The power is yours.
[All Cooldowns Reset]
Somehow Max could sense the change inside him. The power it took to do what Bob had just done hurt their goal.
Yet he wasn't going to lose. There would be no more of that.
"Let's end this!" Max shouted, setting his feet and clenching both fists.
Roaring, the lioness charged, tossing the staff way as she came, claws ready to strike.
[Evasion]
[Bulwark]
[Armored Warrior]
[Harden Body]
[Ice Nova]
[Berserker]
Claws shattered as his fists hit her attacks, blood came from him and from her, and yet the two bashed at each other.
Max's world was calm, almost serene, as he saw the lionkin's yellow eye blinking rapidly.
Every slash she sent was met by his fist, and the impact left her injured more than him.
In six seconds both of them had hit the other at least thirty times, and now Sheemena's arms were connected to broken and battered hands, claws missing from every finger.
"Class is over," Max growled.
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Strike]
The right side of her exploded in a shower of red.
No bones or other material existed as the power of Max's combination of attacks struck three times in an instant.
He fell onto the furry shoulder, the body of his foe standing there, headless for a few seconds before it began to fall.
A roaring fire filled him, hot, cold, electric.
[Bonus Stats Consumed]
[3 Dexterity Consumed]
[31 Constitution Consumed]
[Stat Milestone 2 Reached]
[Constitution of 500 acquired]
[Bonus resistance granted - immune to damage from Epic and below grade weapons or spells]

[Bonus hit points granted - 100% more hit points]
[Rest required for final Milestone upgrade]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Harden Body - Rare has been upgraded to Harden Body - Epic]
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[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Ultimate Form]?]
[Yes / No]
His body gave out, and both he and the headless corpse fell toward the arena floor. Bouncing a few times against the ground, a presence moved toward him.
Let me have this.
Darkness took over as Max let go, letting Bob have control.

PAT 34 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 308

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390374 2024-12-04

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KILL HER NOW!

Moving with everything he had, Max raced toward her, seeing her lift her head as he reached her in a heartbeat, swinging his fist.

[Power Strike]

[Festering Touch]

[Weakness]

[Rampage]

[Magical Strike]

[Quick Attack]

[Ghost Attack]

With a speed that he couldn’t see, even though it was his own hand, Max’s fist struck her three times, right in the head, and each blow that connected knocked the head downward into the stone.

Her body flashed black, and then the claw of hers that had been holding the sword, but were not letting her push upward came at him, moving with almost the same speed of the attack he had just used.

It hit him right in the leg, sending him flying across the arena floor until he crashed into the wall.

[Regeneration]

Pain filled him. His leg was broken, and he knew it was starting to mend together, but as he staggered to stand, Max watched as the lioness roared.

Half of her head was missing.

The green circlet was gone, and as Sheemena or whatever she was stood there, hunched partially over, the one eye that still worked locked onto Max.

“Time to die…”

Her voice carried across that distance, barely faster than she had been.

Now the lioness stood twenty-three feet tall, and every part of her was bristling with muscles that seemed impossible to house on that frame.

The claws on her hand were each a foot long, and there was no doubt how sharp they were.

As she charged, Max summoned the stone wall, the ice wall, the air wall, each one placed in her path, trying to trip her or slow her down as he pressed against the stone wall to stand.

Both the stone wall and ice wall shattered against her legs, the air wall catching her face slightly and knocking her just a little bit upward, but it too was gone in a moment, unable to withstand her power.

Every stone block that was within his range came racing like arrows, pelting her body, armor now gone and nothing but dark orange fur covering the beast that sought his death.

Sheemena used her arms to swat away the blocks, shattering them into dust, none of them withstanding the power she possessed.

His Ice Nova was preparing, just about ready to cast as the lioness reached him.

Both claws came in a slashing attack, aiming to shred him like paper.

[Demonic Teleportation]

Ten long grooves were set in the stone as he vanished, appearing behind her in a last-ditch attack.

His staff came at her from behind.

Its tip had been cut, trimmed to a fine point. No longer was it blunt, as in all the other matches.

She turned as the weapon came, trying to find where Max had gone, the staff piercing her side and burying itself within her back.

Sheemena howled with pain as she felt the six-foot staff in her side and back, wedged within her muscles and flesh.

Those yellow eyes locked on Max, who was almost able to stand as normal, his broken leg almost now healed.

As she turned to come at him, Max had an ice spear forming, growing it as fast as he could.

Both of her feet pressed off the ground, jumping at him, aimed once more to take Max’s life.

His staff, still wedged inside her, was sent upward, carrying her body higher than intended, missing her target by a dozen yards, landing awkwardly as the staff fought against her.

Blinking, Max watched as she reached around her own side and started slashing at her skin with a few claws, forcing Sheemena backward a few steps as his weapon pulled against her flesh and skin. He felt it burst free as the muscle and hide that had imprisoned it was torn loose.

Trying to summon it back, Max felt it not moving, seeing the bloody and crazed lioness holding his staff in her clenched fist.

“No more!”

His leg was healed, he could stand, and the pain was gone, but Max knew at this moment everything was going to come down to the next few seconds.

I need help.

The power is yours.

[All Cooldowns Reset]

Somehow Max could sense the change inside him. The power it took to do what Bob had just done hurt their goal.

Yet he wasn’t going to lose. There would be no more of that.

“Let’s end this!” Max shouted, setting his feet and clenching both fists.

Roaring, the lioness charged, tossing the staff way as she came, claws ready to strike.

[Evasion]

[Bulwark]

[Armored Warrior]

[Harden Body]

[Ice Nova]

[Berserker]

Claws shattered as his fists hit her attacks, blood came from him and from her, and yet the two bashed at each other.

Max’s world was calm, almost serene, as he saw the lionkin’s yellow eye blinking rapidly.

Every slash she sent was met by his fist, and the impact left her injured more than him.

In six seconds both of them had hit the other at least thirty times, and now Sheemena’s arms were connected to broken and battered hands, claws missing from every finger.

“Class is over,” Max growled.

[Demonic Teleportation]

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

[Quick Attack]

[Ghost Strike]

The right side of her exploded in a shower of red.

No bones or other material existed as the power of Max’s combination of attacks struck three times in an instant.

He fell onto the furry shoulder, the body of his foe standing there, headless for a few seconds before it began to fall.

A roaring fire filled him, hot, cold, electric.

[Bonus Stats Consumed]

[3 Dexterity Consumed]

[31 Constitution Consumed]

[Stat Milestone 2 Reached]

[Constitution of 500 acquired]

[Bonus resistance granted - immune to damage from Epic and below grade weapons or spells]

[Bonus hit points granted - 100% more hit points]

[Rest required for final Milestone upgrade]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill does not match being’s body type]

[Consume is adjusting skill]

[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Harden Body - Rare has been upgraded to Harden Body - Epic]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

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[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill does not match being’s body type]

[Consume is adjusting skill]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Ultimate Form]?]

[Yes / No]

His body gave out, and both he and the headless corpse fell toward the arena floor.

Bouncing a few times against the ground, a presence moved toward him.

Let me have this.

Darkness took over as Max let go, letting Bob have control.

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1965872/chapter-309 2025-01-16;

Chapter 309

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Even worse, his body felt like flames had engulfed every square inch of him, yet he knew he was standing.

Bob was running the show, and once again, watching from a far-off position, Max saw Igarra standing a few yards away from him, her body tense.

“I appreciate your concern to come rushing in and make sure that I am not in need of assistance.”

Hearing his own voice sounded weird, especially as it seemed to echo sometimes.

Igarra’s golden eyes shifted as she looked Max up and down.

“Yes… I was not certain that you were okay. I am glad to see that you are.”

Around them, Max could hear the faintest cry from the spectators. Everyone was crying out his name, chanting it over and over.

“I assume I have displayed enough power to be allowed into the final ring of the city?”

The golden lizard woman said nothing, her lips curling as she stared down at Max.

“You have defeated a champion. Forced Sheemena’s hand to show a power she rarely revealed, and still managed to kill her with just your bare hands. That is the least of my questions. I would like to know how you have powers typically associated with our world and not others. Even more interesting is that you say Ezreal captured you and set you free to only later hunt you. Why that man would do such a foolish thing is what really bothers me.”

“I have not lied. He surprised me with a portal and imprisoned me. After failing to break my will after a few months, he revealed who he really was. I doubt anyone but Ezreal knows why he does anything at all.”

A snort came as the golden lizard stood like a statue. Waves of power washed out from her, yet Max stood without flinching.

He wanted to ask Bob what the plan was but wasn’t sure what would happen if he did. Their only chance right now was letting his skill take over, as Max knew he couldn’t control his own body like this.

The shouts of his name continued, and Igarra glanced upward at the people around them.

“You have earned the right to come into the inner city, but I must warn you. What lies beyond the last gate is nothing like you can fathom. To go beyond them is a chance most will never get, and what you will face in my arena will be far worse than any nightmare you could imagine.

“What about the tower? Is there a way for me to enter it?”

She scoffed, shaking her head as she crossed her arms.

“You want to enter *my* tower? What would possess you to desire such a thing?”

Max felt himself shrug and a smile start to form on his face.

Whatever game Bob was playing at, it was going to be announced soon.

“I think it would be interesting to try a tower from another world. I doubt Suljin would mind as I won’t seek to complete it, simply to see how it stacks up to what I have faced before.”

Igarra laughed, and it was obvious from the tone that her thoughts on Bob’s statement was complete amusement.

“Perhaps she might. Win three matches in my arena. Then I will give you the chance. After that, I will see if I might be able to find a way to return you to your world.”

“And what would that cost?”

Both of her golden eyes sparkled as she raised her clawed hands.

“That price has yet to be set. Let’s see if you can first earn the right to enter the tower. Survive that, and then we shall see.”
Igarra snapped her fingers, and the barrier vanished, the wave of sound assaulting them both.
Ifrit! Ifrit! Ifrit!
Her fingers snapped again, and every ounce of sound stopped.
“My people! We have a new champion! Ifrit has earned the right to cross the gates and enter into the inner city!”
Hands and arms waved in the air, and yet still no sound came from the gathered horde of spectators.
“So wish him one last goodbye and know that if you are ever fortunate enough to earn the right to enter in, perhaps you can witness him once again, fighting in my arena!”
She turned and walked away, the spell or ability she had just used to silence everyone ended, and once again, Max heard the people chanting his name.
Can you walk?
Barely. Your body is in need of a long rest. I am burning my own power to keep you upright. Wait till we are home. Then we can talk.
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Max stared at the stars and planets that surrounded him.
Next to him in the void was Bob, floating as he was.
I don’t suppose any of the planets out here is mine.
One might be, but I cannot control where we are right now. This isn’t your world, and things are different. I can feel a string that pulls me toward it, but there is no way for me to act upon it right now.
Silence hung once again, and Max felt a peace in this place.
She was going to kill me wasn’t she?
Her aura gave off that desire. When you stumbled, she saw the chance. It was always there, a desire to remove the threat. I know you missed her expression when I stood, smirking as she came.
So much has changed. The power and those skills.
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Harden Body - Epic Skill: The user’s body takes on a toughness equal to twice their Constitution bonus. Any physical or magical resistance is doubled. Lasts ten seconds. Cooldown is twenty-four hours.
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That skill is awfully powerful. Did you know what it was when you saw Sheemena use it?
Not specifically, but I could recognize the danger of it. Any ability that makes someone grow like that is rare. If at all possible, we should resist showing it unless no other options are available.
Do you think Igarra will buy the reason we will give her on how we are able to do what we can?
Bob said nothing for a few minutes, staring at the moving solar systems around them, frowning the entire time.
It may not matter if she does or does not. What lies beyond those walls is still a mystery, but we both know there is a power over there. I am interested in what it is.

Both of them stayed like they were for hours, neither needing to speak, both aware that everything was about to change.
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Max’s scream lasted less than a second.
It was the third night since the fight against Sheemena.
He was waiting for Jazzjak to finish up a few matters of business, so that he could depart for the inner city, and during that time, all Max did was eat, train, and sleep.
Halfway through the night his body broke.
For the smallest moment his brain wondered if someone had attacked, somehow sneaking inside the room.
It seemed impossible, getting past his Sonar, unless the whole room had smashed him flat.
That idea seemed reasonable, as it was exactly what it felt like.
His bones were breaking, every fiber of his body ripping and tearing.
Even the skin on his body felt like it was being peeled off.
[Regeneration]
His skill helped only slightly, but it seemed even it couldn’t keep up with whatever was happening.
Ligaments tore, vanishing into nothingness, melting into a pile of goo.
Everything inside him except his brain felt like it was being eradicated from existence. The melting of his flesh and muscle by the acid of the worm hadn’t hurt this bad.
It’s the milestone for your stats!
That knowledge that Bob shouted in his head helped slightly as the entire fabric of his being began to reform. Where his bones had been, new ones, stronger ones, much denser than before grew.
For a moment there was no pain. He could feel and sense the shifting inside what was the goo of what had been his body.
No nerves!
There was no pain, but as Max had realized his nerves were gone right now, a skeleton formed, and then the organs that had been destroyed returned as well, tougher and feeling like they worked better.
He wanted to laugh, wanted to cry, but as his lungs returned, filling with air, and he took one massive breath through a gaping hole of a tube that grew toward his mouth, Max felt his heart explode.
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One second it was there, the next it became a mist in his chest, surrounded by all the other organs and bones.
Yet in seconds, it was back, pumping blood at an alarming rate.
Then the pain hit once more as his nerves regrew, stretching over the muscles that magically grew all around him.
He felt strong. Stronger than before.
He screamed once more.
Panting, everything returned, and Max blinked the eyelids that appeared, aware that whatever had just taken place had been a mercy.
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“I’m fine! I promise!”
“Are you sure?! That scream didn’t sound good!”
Groaning, Max felt something under him and realized his mattress was covered in blood and other goo from when his body had just disintegrated.
“Actually,” Max called out as he heard his stomach grumble, “I need some food! Give me twenty minutes, and I’ll be down there!”
“Okay!”
Sliding off the mattress, Max did his best to not drip onto his pants or boots, which were on the floor next to the bed.
Imagine if I had been wearing those while I slept.
It would have been fun cleaning them out.
Max walked across the room, leaving bloody footprints and other droppings on the stone floor as he headed to the sink in his room. Turning the handle and injecting mana in the rune he wanted, the water turned warm, flowing very slowly so as not to be wasted.
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PAT 35 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 309

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390376 2024-12-04;

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36 Chapter 310

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A NOTE FROM AUTHOR_NAME

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/100831/salt-fat-acid-magic-food-themed-progression-fantasy]

Chapter 310
“Are you sure you want another serving?”
Nodding as he chewed, Max grabbed the cup that had just been filled by one of the moth attendants, lifting it to his lips and preparing to gulp it down.
“That’s your fifth serving,” Kauakan stated as he motioned at the pile of growing plates. “How can you eat all that?”
“Mhm hungry…”
Jazzjak said something to the servant who was standing by, and they ran off quickly, headed toward the kitchen once more.
“You look… different. Did your robe shrink?”
Coughing as he guzzled the fruity liquid, Max wiped his mouth and shrugged.
“I’ll need a new one for sure. And I owe an apology to the mess they’re going to find in my room.”
Both of his patrons glanced at each other, and the vorpal rabbit said something that sent one of the last attendants standing idly in the room on a trip up the stairs.
“Accidents happen.”
Max grinned at Jazzjak and shook his head.
“Not like that.”
***
Having just jumped off the carriage that had taken the three of them to the inner-city gate, Max found himself staring at the sight before him.
Guards of every race stood at attention, and each of them gave off an aura similar to the fighters he had faced in this ring of the city. Plate, chain, and leather armor was on full display, and a few even wore robes.
“Is there a reason why they are all wearing gold colored armor?”
“It’s a symbol of Igarra. Every citizen of Quan Ma knows that if they speak, you act immediately or you will die.”
A few of the guards who were close enough to hear Jazzjak chuckled, and yet Max could sense the hesitation from all of them to come toward him.
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It's funny...

Book 7 is written... oh and uploaded to Royal Road... now I gota make a new volume ;)

Don't forget Book 6 ends on JANUARY 13th on Royal Road - You need to read it asap as I have to take it down for Amazon Launch on Jan 20th!

((Book 6 ends Dec 25th on Patreon))

Book 7 will start on Royal Road January 20th!

((Book 7 starts on Jan 1st on Patreon))

Keep reading ((Back to my writing dungeon I go))

PAT 36 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 310

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390380 2024-12-05;

“Are you sure you want another serving?”
Nodding as he chewed, Max grabbed the cup that had just been filled by one of the moth attendants, lifting it to his lips and preparing to gulp it down.
“That’s your fifth serving,” Kauakan stated as he motioned at the pile of growing plates. “How can you eat all that?”
“Mhm hungry…”
Jazzjak said something to the servant who was standing by, and they ran off quickly, headed toward the kitchen once more.
“You look… different. Did your robe shrink?”
Coughing as he guzzled the fruity liquid, Max wiped his mouth and shrugged.
“I’ll need a new one for sure. And I owe an apology to the mess they’re going to find in my room.”
Both of his patrons glanced at each other, and the vorpal rabbit said something that sent one of the last attendants standing idly in the room on a trip up the stairs.
“Accidents happen.”
Max grinned at Jazzjak and shook his head.
“Not like that.”
***
Having just jumped off the carriage that had taken the three of them to the inner-city gate, Max found himself staring at the sight before him.
Guards of every race stood at attention, and each of them gave off an aura similar to the fighters he had faced in this ring of the city.
Plate, chain, and leather armor was on full display, and a few even wore robes.

“Is there a reason why they are all wearing gold colored armor?”
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37 Chapter 311

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1972746/chapter-311 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/101201/somebody-stop-him/chapter/1966002/chapter-1-the-way-south]

Chapter 311
"What is this material?"
Jazzjak was stroking the fur on the chair of the small apartment they had been given for now. Max couldn't help but shrug as the bright yellow fur looked out of place compared to all the other colors that furniture and rugs were made of.
"It's like someone took a rainbow and threw up in the room here," he replied. "I don't even recognize the wood or stone in this place."

The vorpal bunny had moved to a glass tabletop, inspecting the bright orange crystal that was three inches thick and appeared to be one piece with the legs. He lifted it up, or tried to, unable to even budge it.
Giving it an attempt, Max managed to move it a few inches, but it felt like something was keeping it pulled toward the floor.
“It’s held down by gravity magic,” Jazzjak stated as he tried to lift the rug.
“Everything here is. Do you… no you wouldn’t. Gravity magic is so rare, I can only think of maybe seeing it once in my life.”
“And they use it to keep furniture in place?”
Chuckling, the rabbit shook his head as he moved toward the kitchen area of the apartment.
“No… it was used to move those stones too large for a Stone Master to move. It is rumored that a true master of gravity magic can crush walls and mountains with a single thought.”
Max studied the room once more, impressed by how everything in the room looked like it was made from one single piece of whatever it was. The wood chair was a solid section of wood, shaped to fit a larger body than his, and the grains in the wood were set in a weird runic language he didn’t understand.
What is this world? Do you recognize any of it, Bob?
Memories… like I’m in a foggy day, and I can see an outline, but I cannot place what or from where. All I know is we are not in Peltagow anymore.
Chuckling to himself, Max moved to where Jazzjak was checking the different cupboards and a cold-infused stone refrigeration unit.
“Hungry?”
“I can eat,” Max replied with a grin.
The rabbit nodded and began pulling things out, and pointed at the area behind them.
“Relax, I’ll make us something. You need to prepare for what you are about to encounter soon.”
“Igarra?” Max asked as he leaned against a counter, choosing to stay inside the kitchen area versus going to the other room.
“Yes, and while I wish I had more answers, the truth is none of us know her true power. Everything we have or know comes from her, or so we are told. It has been more generations than I could count that have called her master of this city. Which means she has been around a long time.”
“Yet she doesn’t look old at all, does she?”
“Says the one with no hair on his face.”
Max rubbed his chin and smiled. Growing hair had never been easy, and it seemed like after he had shaved his head, it felt ok to be bald everywhere.
“Power changes you,” Jazzjak stated as he began to cut some vegetables with ease, handling a blade so fast it blurred. “Those who gain enough are rumored to have lived for thousands of years. Some even ten times that.”
“Wouldn’t someone get bored living that long? I mean… I’ve only been alive eighteen years and—”
The noise of the knife falling to the floor and some of the carrots the rabbit had found moving to join it cut Max off.
“You’re… only eighteen?”
The wide red eyes and open mouth on his companion left no doubt of how shocked the rabbit was.
“I am…” Max replied slowly. “How old are you?”
“Closing in on two hundred years… Still, how have you gained so much power in so little time? Is your world that strong?”
“No. I’m kind of different from most. Even in my party… my friends who I climbed the tower with were strong, but they would have struggled against everyone I have faced here.”
Having retrieved the fallen vegetables and knife, Jazzjak nodded slowly.
“Tell me… just how strong are you, Ifrit?”

Max sighed and motioned to the knife his companion held.
“How good is that knife? Will it cut you?”
“It is very sharp. I’m actually glad I managed to not lose a finger when I slipped earlier.”
“Good. Try to cut me with it,” Max stated as he held out his hand.
Cocking his head, the vorpal bunny stared at him a few times. Even though he kept motioning his hand out, it took a few seconds for Jazzjak to come close and slash at the outstretched hand.
The knife hit and slid, not cutting the skin at all.
Both ears shot straight up, and two red eyes grew bigger.
“Harder.”
Like a predator, the rabbit slashed, moving just as fast as he had when cutting vegetables a minute ago, and yet after twenty plus slashes, no mark was made.
“How… I know for a fact when we first met this would not have been the outcome.”
The confusion in his companion’s voice brought a smile to Max’s face.
“How does one grow stronger? By defeating those who are above them. I have done that, and I will continue to do so. Now, let’s eat. I’m hungry.”
***
“My mistress has requested your presence. Please come.”
Max nodded, and as Jazzjak started to follow, the pink insect, which had no eyes, just a large round body that rolled, spun in circles suddenly.
“No. Only he may come. You may stay here or explore, but know that she is not responsible if you get lost or end up in trouble.”
“I will be fine,” Jazzjak stated as he motioned toward the door. “Go and return. I will be around.”
***
The buildings grew even taller as they moved toward the tower and where Igarra must have her home. Each street was packed, and the variety of creatures and beings sometimes left Max feeling out of place.
His robe was nothing special, and his appearance had many staring and whispering. Often their gazes were at his staff more than at him, and Max wasn’t sure if any of them could detect what it gave.
An hour went by as they walked at a quick pace, or at least he walked. The insect said nothing, rolling along, leading the way through the crowd that seemed to move as it got close.
As they moved past buildings with lights of every color that blinked rapidly, drawing guests or patrons inside the large doors, they came to a section where all the buildings stopped. A four-hundred-yard section of nothing but purple grass led to a short gold wall, maybe three feet high with a single path that led to a gate.
“That seems awfully short,” Max stated. “I guess no one would be foolish enough to come uninvited?”
“No, they would not.”
Its reply had been short, no desire for chit-chat at all.
Upon reaching the gate, a shimmering area ran between two larger gold stones, and Max felt a chill run through him.
Something to detect a visitor?
Or an enemy.
All he had seen before that moment was the tower. It was over half a mile away, but once he crossed the gate threshold, a giant house-like structure, larger than the castle the queens lived in appeared, encircling the tower completely.
“That is impressive… all that for just one person?”
A scoff-like sound came, and the insect stopped its spinning, turning around once and remained motionless.
“My mistress is not a person. She is everything. This is her domain. We are fortunate to be allowed in her presence… No, to even be on the same world.”
As soon as it finished scolding him, it turned, moving once more, and Max could detect it had sped up some.

More guards appeared, all standing in the same gold armor. It was almost as if they were statues, as none moved anything other than their eyes, watching as he followed the path of worked purple stones that led to the grape-colored monstrosity that Igarra called home.
Each step was etched with artwork depicting titanic battles, so well done, Max could sense the flow of combat in them.
After climbing thirty steps, they stopped on a porch-like area with fifty-foot columns that ran to the overhang. Underneath it was a large black door.
That's crystal, not glass…
At about thirty feet tall, it began to move, making no sound as it swung inward.
His eyes barely picked up another shimmering light where the door had just been.
She has many different pockets of space. This means she is most likely a master of some kind of dimensional energy.
Like my necklace or one of those items?
Perhaps even more… there are many different kinds. I cannot recall them all right now, but I know she is strong if she possesses that power.
Holding up his hand and moving till it was just a few inches from the shimmering surface, Max waited.
I sense nothing… it should be safe.
Without waiting any longer, he stepped through the shimmering area and found himself in a long hall.
Gone was the purple-colored stone, now replaced with a silver colored one.
At least it doesn't hurt my eyes to look around now.
Tall columns rose to the thirty-foot ceiling, and Max realized no one was inside here but Igarra, who sat on a golden throne at the end of the hall.
At about a hundred yards long, it took him a bit to make his way toward her, not rushing and studying the purple portals that were set on each side between the columns.
Twenty of them. I'm assuming they each go somewhere else…
To keep them active would cost a lot of mana. Either she has something to power them, or Igarra is attempting to show you a bit of her strength. Eventually she would have to close some of them if it was her.
" *Ifrit,* I am glad that you have finally joined me in my home."
Her words carried an air of amusement, and the teeth that showed from her curved lips did not hide the threat she possessed.
"I am grateful for the invitation, Igarra. I must say I am impressed by the amount of dimensional power you possess. So many portals and pockets."
Her left eyelid shifted just so slightly, and had he not had Sonar and been able to feel the variation, his eyes would have missed that detail as Max continued to draw closer to her.
"You are aware of them… interesting. Not many would know of their power outside of having completed the tower… Tell me, do you really wish to enter my tower?"
Giving the slightest bend of his neck, Max nodded.
"I would enjoy getting to see what yours might offer, though I doubt I have the time right now to fully climb it. I would rather prefer to find a way to remove Ezreal and return home."
A soft chuckle came from the woman as she tapped a ringed finger against her chin.
"Removing him is not an easy task. Trust me, I know. I have made many attempts at freeing this world from his presence, and each time I have failed. Tell me, do you think you are strong enough to accomplish such a task?"
"Perhaps. I will say he caught me off guard when he captured me from my world and put me in his play area. If we do meet again, I hope that this time he will learn I am not as easy to capture."
All of her teeth were on display, and Max could feel her heart was beating just a little faster.
"Well then, perhaps I can help you in preparing for that moment. You are going to have to fight in the arena here, and I want you to know that everything you have

faced before means nothing. Those who come here to fight are from other worlds, seeking power, items, deals, and a variety of other opportunities not available from where they are from."
Rising to her feet, Igarra left her throne, moved down the two steps of the platform, and walked till she was just a few feet from Max.
"Are you willing to bet everything, your life included, to have the chance to grow?"
The way she said that… it's almost like she knows something.
"I am."
"Very well," she replied with a nod. "Then there is no time to waste. Follow me."
With that she moved, an air of no concern that he was behind her.
Turning, he followed Igarra as she moved toward one of the portals halfway in the room.
"This one will take you to the staging area. I shall go first so that you know I am not sending you to some trap."
Strange words to say…
Ignoring the concern he and his skill had, Max nodded and followed the woman through the shimmering purple portal.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

For those who enjoy the audio side of things, Book 4 just went live!

PAT 37 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 311

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390381 2024-12-05;

"What is this material?"
Jazzjak was stroking the fur on the chair of the small apartment they had been given for now. Max couldn't help but shrug as the bright yellow fur looked out of place compared to all the other colors that furniture and rugs were made of.
"It's like someone took a rainbow and threw up in the room here," he replied. "I don't even recognize the wood or stone in this place."
The vorpal bunny had moved to a glass tabletop, inspecting the bright orange crystal that was three inches thick and appeared to be one piece with the legs. He lifted it up, or tried to, unable to even budge it.
Giving it an attempt, Max managed to move it a few inches, but it felt like something was keeping it pulled toward the floor.
"It's held down by gravity magic," Jazzjak stated as he tried to lift the rug. "Everything here is. Do you… no you wouldn't. Gravity magic is so rare, I can only think of maybe seeing it once in my life."
"And they use it to keep furniture in place?"

Chuckling, the rabbit shook his head as he moved toward the kitchen area of the apartment.
“No… it was used to move those stones too large for a Stone Master to move. It is rumored that a true master of gravity magic can crush walls and mountains with a single thought.”
Max studied the room once more, impressed by how everything in the room looked like it was made from one single piece of whatever it was. The wood chair was a solid section of wood, shaped to fit a larger body than his, and the grains in the wood were set in a weird runic language he didn’t understand.
What is this world? Do you recognize any of it, Bob?
Memories… like I’m in a foggy day, and I can see an outline, but I cannot place what or from where. All I know is we are not in Peltagow anymore.
Chuckling to himself, Max moved to where Jazzjak was checking the different cupboards and a cold-infused stone refrigeration unit.
“Hungry?”
“I can eat,” Max replied with a grin.
The rabbit nodded and began pulling things out, and pointed at the area behind them.
“Relax, I’ll make us something. You need to prepare for what you are about to encounter soon.”
“Igarra?” Max asked as he leaned against a counter, choosing to stay inside the kitchen area versus going to the other room.
“Yes, and while I wish I had more answers, the truth is none of us know her true power. Everything we have or know comes from her, or so we are told. It has been more generations than I could count that have called her master of this city. Which means she has been around a long time.”
“Yet she doesn’t look old at all, does she?”
“Says the one with no hair on his face.”
Max rubbed his chin and smiled. Growing hair had never been easy, and it seemed like after he had shaved his head, it felt ok to be bald everywhere.
“Power changes you,” Jazzjak stated as he began to cut some vegetables with ease, handling a blade so fast it blurred. “Those who gain enough are rumored to have lived for thousands of years. Some even ten times that.”
“Wouldn’t someone get bored living that long? I mean… I’ve only been alive eighteen years and—”
The noise of the knife falling to the floor and some of the carrots the rabbit had found moving to join it cut Max off.
“You’re… only eighteen?”

The wide red eyes and open mouth on his companion left no doubt of how shocked the rabbit was.
“I am…” Max replied slowly. “How old are you?”
“Closing in on two hundred years… Still, how have you gained so much power in so little time? Is your world that strong?”
“No. I’m kind of different from most. Even in my party… my friends who I climbed the tower with were strong, but they would have struggled against everyone I have faced here.”
Having retrieved the fallen vegetables and knife, Jazzjak nodded slowly.
“Tell me… just how strong are you, Ifrit?”
Max sighed and motioned to the knife his companion held.
“How good is that knife? Will it cut you?”
“It is very sharp. I’m actually glad I managed to not lose a finger when I slipped earlier.”
“Good. Try to cut me with it,” Max stated as he held out his hand.
Cocking his head, the vorpal bunny stared at him a few times. Even though he kept motioning his hand out, it took a few seconds for Jazzjak to come close and slash at the outstretched hand.
The knife hit and slid, not cutting the skin at all.
Both ears shot straight up, and two red eyes grew bigger.
“Harder.”
Like a predator, the rabbit slashed, moving just as fast as he had when cutting vegetables a minute ago, and yet after twenty plus slashes, no mark was made.
“How… I know for a fact when we first met this would not have been the outcome.”
The confusion in his companion’s voice brought a smile to Max’s face.
“How does one grow stronger? By defeating those who are above them. I have done that, and I will continue to do so. Now, let’s eat. I’m hungry.”
***
“My mistress has requested your presence. Please come.”
Max nodded, and as Jazzjak started to follow, the pink insect, which had no eyes, just a large round body that rolled, spun in circles suddenly.
“No. Only he may come. You may stay here or explore, but know that she is not responsible if you get lost or end up in trouble.”
“I will be fine,” Jazzjak stated as he motioned toward the door. “Go and return. I will be around.”
***
The buildings grew even taller as they moved toward the tower and where Igarra must have her home. Each street was packed, and the

variety of creatures and beings sometimes left Max feeling out of place.
His robe was nothing special, and his appearance had many staring and whispering. Often their gazes were at his staff more than at him, and Max wasn't sure if any of them could detect what it gave.
An hour went by as they walked at a quick pace, or at least he walked. The insect said nothing, rolling along, leading the way through the crowd that seemed to move as it got close.
As they moved past buildings with lights of every color that blinked rapidly, drawing guests or patrons inside the large doors, they came to a section where all the buildings stopped. A four-hundred-yard section of nothing but purple grass led to a short gold wall, maybe three feet high with a single path that led to a gate.
"That seems awfully short," Max stated. "I guess no one would be foolish enough to come uninvited?"
"No, they would not."
Its reply had been short, no desire for chit-chat at all.
Upon reaching the gate, a shimmering area ran between two larger gold stones, and Max felt a chill run through him.
Something to detect a visitor?
Or an enemy.
All he had seen before that moment was the tower. It was over half a mile away, but once he crossed the gate threshold, a giant house-like structure, larger than the castle the queens lived in appeared, encircling the tower completely.
"That is impressive… all that for just one person?"
A scoff-like sound came, and the insect stopped its spinning, turning around once and remained motionless.
"My mistress is not a person. She is everything. This is her domain. We are fortunate to be allowed in her presence… No, to even be on the same world."
As soon as it finished scolding him, it turned, moving once more, and Max could detect it had sped up some.
More guards appeared, all standing in the same gold armor. It was almost as if they were statues, as none moved anything other than their eyes, watching as he followed the path of worked purple stones that led to the grape-colored monstrosity that Igarra called home.
Each step was etched with artwork depicting titanic battles, so well done, Max could sense the flow of combat in them.
After climbing thirty steps, they stopped on a porch-like area with fifty-foot columns that ran to the overhang. Underneath it was a large black door.
That's crystal, not glass…

At about thirty feet tall, it began to move, making no sound as it swung inward.
His eyes barely picked up another shimmering light where the door had just been.
She has many different pockets of space. This means she is most likely a master of some kind of dimensional energy.
Like my necklace or one of those items?
Perhaps even more… there are many different kinds. I cannot recall them all right now, but I know she is strong if she possesses that power.
Holding up his hand and moving till it was just a few inches from the shimmering surface, Max waited.
I sense nothing… it should be safe.
Without waiting any longer, he stepped through the shimmering area and found himself in a long hall.
Gone was the purple-colored stone, now replaced with a silver colored one.
At least it doesn't hurt my eyes to look around now.
Tall columns rose to the thirty-foot ceiling, and Max realized no one was inside here but Igarra, who sat on a golden throne at the end of the hall.
At about a hundred yards long, it took him a bit to make his way toward her, not rushing and studying the purple portals that were set on each side between the columns.
Twenty of them. I'm assuming they each go somewhere else…
To keep them active would cost a lot of mana. Either she has something to power them, or Igarra is attempting to show you a bit of her strength. Eventually she would have to close some of them if it was her.
"*Ifrit,* I am glad that you have finally joined me in my home."
Her words carried an air of amusement, and the teeth that showed from her curved lips did not hide the threat she possessed.
"I am grateful for the invitation, Igarra. I must say I am impressed by the amount of dimensional power you possess. So many portals and pockets."
Her left eyelid shifted just so slightly, and had he not had Sonar and been able to feel the variation, his eyes would have missed that detail as Max continued to draw closer to her.
"You are aware of them… interesting. Not many would know of their power outside of having completed the tower… Tell me, do you really wish to enter my tower?"
Giving the slightest bend of his neck, Max nodded.

“I would enjoy getting to see what yours might offer, though I doubt I have the time right now to fully climb it. I would rather prefer to find a way to remove Ezreal and return home.”
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All of her teeth were on display, and Max could feel her heart was beating just a little faster.
“Well then, perhaps I can help you in preparing for that moment. You are going to have to fight in the arena here, and I want you to know that everything you have faced before means nothing. Those who come here to fight are from other worlds, seeking power, items, deals, and a variety of other opportunities not available from where they are from.”
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“Are you willing to bet everything, your life included, to have the chance to grow?”
The way she said that… it’s almost like she knows something.
“I am.”
“Very well,” she replied with a nod. “Then there is no time to waste. Follow me.”
With that she moved, an air of no concern that he was behind her. Turning, he followed Igarra as she moved toward one of the portals halfway in the room.
“This one will take you to the staging area. I shall go first so that you know I am not sending you to some trap.”
Strange words to say…
Ignoring the concern he and his skill had, Max nodded and followed the woman through the shimmering purple portal.

38 Chapter 312

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1974213/chapter-312 2025-01-16;

Chapter 312

“This is your home until about eight hours from now,” Igarra stated as she motioned to the luxurious suite they were standing in. “A servant will come and summon you when it is time to join everyone else in the arena. Just note, you will have a special box like last time, allowing you to witness a fight before you go. I am certain you will be thoroughly entertained.”

“Is there anything else I should know about these fights?”

“Beyond that they are to the death?” she asked, grinning the entire time she spoke.

“Besides that.”

“Since it is your first time, I will tell you that the arena changes every fight. Unlike the ones you fought in, there is rarely a flat surface, and the space each duel takes place in is far larger than before. You might find yourself in an ocean, in a forest, or perhaps even on a mountain. Sometimes there may be no land at all.”

“I see… and how does that get decided?”

Igarra gave a shrug, and her toothy smile never left her face.

“Perhaps in time you will find that out. For now, rest. There is food in the container over there, and rest assured, nothing is tainted. It would not behoove anyone to remove you before a fight.”

With that she turned, moved to a section of the silver stone wall, and a line appeared, framing the shape of a door.

After it connected, the section opened, and she walked through it, her back still turned to him.

“Rest. You’re going to need it.”

***

This space… it is different. The fact we can communicate so easily and the lack of energy it requires means we are… closer to the source of something…

What do you mean by something?

Digging through a container of chilled food, Max pulled out some water and fruit, studying the green item before taking a small bite.

“Sooooo good.”

Sweet juice ran down his chin, and he didn’t hesitate to consume the rest of it while Bob worked on that question.

The name of it I cannot remember, but the system has power, and here there is much. Unlike your world, which acts as a barrier to the system, keeping you from being exposed to it, here that barrier is almost nonexistent.

Perhaps that is why so many of the ones we faced were stronger. The lack of the barrier allows them to acquire more of the system than your world does.

Why would the god of this planet want that? I thought gods used their worlds to grow stronger. Wouldn’t allowing the people or creatures on it to become stronger faster drain more power?

Max could sense Bob thinking.

I’m not certain how each world works. There are many variations to all systems. Something tells me this world functions differently… Perhaps as things die, the god here gains a portion of that power.

He could feel the frown on his face.

A god that desires death of their own…

It is far more common than you can imagine. Many gain power by fighting against other worlds. That is why some might have a barrier like your world does. This planet would give more power to the one who conquers it but would also provide a greater threat.

And any god could just attack?

I’m certain that answer is no, but… I can’t recall how it works. In time… Give me more time, Max. Let me grow stronger, and perhaps I shall remember. For now, focus on what we are about to face. Use the gift she

has given of seeing the first fight as a chance to learn. I doubt we will ever get that again.
Knowing Bob was right, Max plopped down in one of the padded chairs and found himself almost completely relaxed the second his butt hit the material.
Ok… I need one of these.
In seconds he was dozing, knowing Bob had him covered.
***
Wake up.
Movement from where Igarra had made a door came, and Max rose, seeing the same shape appearing.
Four seconds later the stone had moved, and a very short and dark colored elf was standing before him. They were smaller than a dwarf, had eyes that glowed purple, and every part of them was black.
Even their outfit is black… what gives?
“Mr. Ifrit… I am here to escort you.”
His eyes studied Max, and the lips appeared to be turned downward, not appreciating how the fighter in the room was gazing at him.
“Sorry,” Max said as he moved to retrieve his staff that was leaning against the next chair. “I was caught off guard. You are an elf, right?”
The servant shook their head and sighed.
“You are asking me a question that would be about the same as if I asked you if you could speak, use your thumbs and might throw poop with your hands.”
“Forgive me, I did not mean to insult you.”
“And yet you did… greatly,” the servant replied. “To answer your question, though, some, albeit foolish ones, would classify me as an elf. Others might call me a shadow elf or a dark elf or some other term, always with the word ‘elf’ attached to it. First, my name is Quilazmore. What I am is something perhaps you might learn in time if you survive tonight. Based on how you speak, I hope you are much better at fighting, as if this was a contest of manners and intelligence, I’m afraid we would never meet again.”
By the gods, I love this one!
Clearing his throat, Max ignored Bob and moved till he stood closer to Quilazmore.
“Forgive me. I did not mean to offend, and this is my first time in such a place.”
The servant studied him before bobbing his head twice and turning.
“We need to leave. Soon the first match will start, and I have orders to get you there on time.”
With that Quilazmore moved toward the door, leaving Max to catch up and watch as they entered a large square room.
The door that had been cut out moved back into position, and after the wall rejoined itself, Max sensed the stone prison moving.
He was grateful for a single light that hung from the ceiling. The nine-by-nine room felt tight.
We are fine. Relax.
Still… it feels like I’m trapped again. I don’t like how this keeps coming up.
Until the day you stand above everything, there will always be the chance to feel trapped. Even worse, some things that will trap you won’t be wagons or stone walls.
The room stopped moving, and the wall before Quilazmore began to draw the same lines, and a door appeared and moved inward. After the opening was clear, his short escort moved into the new room.
“This is your private viewing area,” Quilazmore stated, his tone matching one of someone who didn’t care if you listened or not, simply doing their job. “That wall before us is a screen and will display the battle. Outside of this room are millions more like this, each varying in size, shape, environments and other oddities. Those who come to watch and bet on these fights come from all over the system.”
Max nodded as he moved through the twenty-by-twenty stone room, ignoring the two couches and one chair, coming to stand before a large screen that immediately

showed an image of a large expanse, easily a mile across in each direction. Trees were growing, a small stream was starting to carve itself through the stone floor, and dirt was appearing.
“Is that the arena area?”
“Yes… it changes every time. Each fight is terraformed into a new design. The options are limitless, but most cannot take place in all environments.”
Quilazmore paused and turned his head, glancing up at Max.
“How long can you hold your breath?”
Cocking an eyebrow and glancing down at the tiny escort, Max snorted.
“I’ve never checked, but why do you ask?”
A grin appeared, and a row of sharp purple teeth ground against each other for a second.
“Some fights make take place completely in water. Others might… has your kind ever left your world? Moved through the sky and into where the moon and sun reside?”
“Uh… not that I know of,” Max replied, his confidence wavering a little internally.
A frown replaced the smile, and Quilazmore pointed at the screen.
“Then you will most likely be fighting in areas you are used to. The arena will not handicap an individual too much. Some who fight here, however, can survive in the cold and vastness of space.”
“Space?” Max asked.
“The… domain outside your world. Your world floats in space. All planets are in space.”
The very thing you see when we gaze down upon the planets and systems. All that darkness and empty area. That is what he is talking about.
“Oh, I know what you mean. All the empty area and darkness between the planets and systems.”
Quilazmore’s right eyebrow twitched a few times.
“Yes… space… was there another name you knew it by, or should I ask how you know so much about what I am talking of?”
“We all have our secrets,” Max replied, focusing on the screen and ignoring the scowl he sensed appear on his guide’s face.
“Very well. I shall return when it is time for your match. Until then, please do not attempt to leave the box.”
With that Quilazmore turned on his heel and moved to where the open doorway was, the stone returning to its original place.
We are in a whole new world… and I didn’t mean that as a joke.
Still, it was funny. Now tell me, what are we going to face?
That, Max, I have no idea about.
***
Most of the forest was on fire, and large chasms ran along the ground.
Both fighters were injured, and the one who had been winning for so long appeared to be on the ropes.
Max couldn’t take his eyes off the screen, watching the two and the destruction they each brought.
An energy attack… how he can still focus that much from just one hand…
While Max spoke, the fighter he was speaking of, Starshine, held up her left hand, another powerful blast of bright white light racing at her opponent.
The quarter of a mile between the two of them was gone in a heartbeat as the ray of power raced toward its target.
As soon as the blast of energy came, the blue-skinned opponent transformed once more, turning into a clear being, and held up their right hand, taking the blast to their chest.
Gruogaroa’s outstretched hand returned the same bolt of energy again, the bolt now blacker than it had been before.
Cheers came as it struck Starshine’s black armor, tearing it apart and removing a section of the woman’s side as she tried to dodge.

The blue one is able to change into so many things… it appears they have learned how to become something that absorbs and redirects the attack back, changing the power in some way.
Yeah… the first few were white and did nothing. Only the last two have done any damage to Starshine.
Crumpled on the ground, blood seeping from her body, the energy user struggled to get up, her white hair no longer in the neat braid behind her, but burnt and everywhere.
A tinge of pain came as Max remembered how he loved Tanila and her hair, especially when it was loose and lay all over the bed or in the tub.
The end is soon; you can sense it as can the rest of the watchers.
His box shook from the vibrations and the muted noise that came from around.
A battle that had looked one-sided at first changed so quickly.
Gruogaroa had been attempting for the first half to dodge and adapt, shifting itself into different materials, pieces blown off or completely evaporated.
Slowly, stiff steps from the crystalized being brought it closer to the woman that had darted and dashed around it with ease. Gone was the speed or the few taunts Starshine had hurled.
Roaring, the woman held her hand out, and it grew brighter, far brighter than Max had expected was possible.
From the open wound light spilled forth.
Sensing a change, Gruogaroa charged, its crystalized body moving with haste, but as it drew close, not moving fast in the form it had taken, Starshine moved her hand to her chest.
Oh my… can you sense it?
Max nodded, the power that now came from the injured fighter somehow radiating as the entire arena floor began to flood with light, the screen he was watching on almost flickering as it appeared to struggle to keep the view working.
One last scream came, and a ball of light raced outward in all directions from Starshine, destroying any tree, dirt, or other matter still standing.
For half a mile it raced outward, and when it was gone, the screen was focused on the spot where the woman had been.
A crater fifteen yards down was there, and about forty yards away Gruogaroa stumbled, its crystal shape changed, no longer clear, now blackened.
“WINNER BUT NOT BY MUCH! YOUR FAVORITE SHIFTING FIGHTER! Gruuuuoooogaaaroooaa!”
She killed herself and almost killed the other.
How are we going to fight that?
Together. Now get ready. We’re up.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Merry Christmas all!

I just wanted to say thanks again for all of you who continue to follow the story!

Don't mind me, I'm just trying to juggle life and writing but book 7 is done in case you missed it!

I'll be starting on book 8 in a week, just need to get these kids back to their normal school schedule!

Enjoy the holidays and keep reading!

PAT 38 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 312 https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390525 2024-12-06;

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“We need to leave. Soon the first match will start, and I have orders to get you there on time.”

With that Quilazmore moved toward the door, leaving Max to catch up and watch as they entered a large square room.

The door that had been cut out moved back into position, and after the wall rejoined itself, Max sensed the stone prison moving.

He was grateful for a single light that hung from the ceiling. The nine-by-nine room felt tight.

We are fine. Relax.

Still… it feels like I’m trapped again. I don’t like how this keeps coming up.

Until the day you stand above everything, there will always be the chance to feel trapped. Even worse, some things that will trap you won’t be wagons or stone walls.

The room stopped moving, and the wall before Quilazmore began to draw the same lines, and a door appeared and moved inward. After the opening was clear, his short escort moved into the new room.

“This is your private viewing area,” Quilazmore stated, his tone matching one of someone who didn’t care if you listened or not, simply doing their job. “That wall before us is a screen and will display the battle. Outside of this room are millions more like this, each varying in size, shape, environments and other oddities. Those who come to watch and bet on these fights come from all over the system.”

Max nodded as he moved through the twenty-by-twenty stone room, ignoring the two couches and one chair, coming to stand before a large screen that immediately showed an image of a large expanse, easily a mile across in each direction. Trees were growing, a small stream was starting to carve itself through the stone floor, and dirt was appearing.

“Is that the arena area?”

“Yes… it changes every time. Each fight is terraformed into a new design. The options are limitless, but most cannot take place in all environments.”

Quilazmore paused and turned his head, glancing up at Max.

“How long can you hold your breath?”

Cocking an eyebrow and glancing down at the tiny escort, Max snorted.

“I’ve never checked, but why do you ask?”

A grin appeared, and a row of sharp purple teeth ground against each other for a second.

“Some fights make take place completely in water. Others might… has your kind ever left your world? Moved through the sky and into where the moon and sun reside?”

“Uh… not that I know of,” Max replied, his confidence wavering a little internally.

A frown replaced the smile, and Quilazmore pointed at the screen.

“Then you will most likely be fighting in areas you are used to. The arena will not handicap an individual too much. Some who fight here, however, can survive in the cold and vastness of space.”

“Space?” Max asked.

“The… domain outside your world. Your world floats in space. All planets are in space.”

The very thing you see when we gaze down upon the planets and systems. All that darkness and empty area. That is what he is talking about.

“Oh, I know what you mean. All the empty area and darkness between the planets and systems.”

Quilazmore’s right eyebrow twitched a few times.

“Yes… space… was there another name you knew it by, or should I ask how you know so much about what I am talking of?”

“We all have our secrets,” Max replied, focusing on the screen and ignoring the scowl he sensed appear on his guide’s face.

“Very well. I shall return when it is time for your match. Until then, please do not attempt to leave the box.”

With that Quilazmore turned on his heel and moved to where the open doorway was, the stone returning to its original place.

We are in a whole new world… and I didn’t mean that as a joke.

Still, it was funny. Now tell me, what are we going to face?

That, Max, I have no idea about.

***

Most of the forest was on fire, and large chasms ran along the ground.

Both fighters were injured, and the one who had been winning for so long appeared to be on the ropes.

Max couldn’t take his eyes off the screen, watching the two and the destruction they each brought.

An energy attack… how he can still focus that much from just one hand…

While Max spoke, the fighter he was speaking of, Starshine, held up her left hand, another powerful blast of bright white light racing at her opponent.

The quarter of a mile between the two of them was gone in a heartbeat as the ray of power raced toward its target.

As soon as the blast of energy came, the blue-skinned opponent transformed once more, turning into a clear being, and held up their right hand, taking the blast to their chest.

Gruogaroa's outstretched hand returned the same bolt of energy again, the bolt now blacker than it had been before.

Cheers came as it struck Starshine's black armor, tearing it apart and removing a section of the woman's side as she tried to dodge.

The blue one is able to change into so many things… it appears they have learned how to become something that absorbs and redirects the attack back, changing the power in some way.

Yeah… the first few were white and did nothing. Only the last two have done any damage to Starshine.

Crumpled on the ground, blood seeping from her body, the energy user struggled to get up, her white hair no longer in the neat braid behind her, but burnt and everywhere.

A tinge of pain came as Max remembered how he loved Tanila and her hair, especially when it was loose and lay all over the bed or in the tub.

The end is soon; you can sense it as can the rest of the watchers.

His box shook from the vibrations and the muted noise that came from around.

A battle that had looked one-sided at first changed so quickly.

Gruogaroa had been attempting for the first half to dodge and adapt, shifting itself into different materials, pieces blown off or completely evaporated.

Slowly, stiff steps from the crystalized being brought it closer to the woman that had darted and dashed around it with ease. Gone was the speed or the few taunts Starshine had hurled.

Roaring, the woman held her hand out, and it grew brighter, far brighter than Max had expected was possible.

From the open wound light spilled forth.

Sensing a change, Gruogaroa charged, its crystalized body moving with haste, but as it drew close, not moving fast in the form it had taken, Starshine moved her hand to her chest.

Oh my… can you sense it?

Max nodded, the power that now came from the injured fighter somehow radiating as the entire arena floor began to flood with light, the screen he was watching on almost flickering as it appeared to struggle to keep the view working.

One last scream came, and a ball of light raced outward in all directions from Starshine, destroying any tree, dirt, or other matter still standing.

For half a mile it raced outward, and when it was gone, the screen was focused on the spot where the woman had been.

A crater fifteen yards down was there, and about forty yards away Gruogaroa stumbled, its crystal shape changed, no longer clear, now blackened.

“WINNER BUT NOT BY MUCH! YOUR FAVORITE SHIFTING FIGHTER! Gruuuuoooogaaaroooaa!”

She killed herself and almost killed the other.

How are we going to fight that?

Together. Now get ready. We’re up.

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1975891/chapter-313 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Check out my other story!

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/87559/battle-through-the-nine-realms-isekai-litrpg]

Max refused to piss himself while waiting in line. He went before he left, of course, but his whole life had come down to a god's whim, and now there were twisting needles running from his bladder down into his balls and up into his gut. He couldn't piss himself. Not with his family with him and the whole town watching. Waiting to see what the gods chose for him.

Max was still thin. Weathered from working with his dad on the sheep farm. The smell of lanolin never quite left his clothes and hands. He wanted to smell like bread and have a life with Nancy.

After hundreds of hours of kneading, folding, and rolling out dough, he should unlock the [Baker] skill. The gods chose, though, and he knew he might get something different. Being human meant Max was most likely to end up with a skill that dealt with growing things or making stuff.

Or you could be one of the chosen few pushing back the front lines against the monsters and other sapients- an adventurer. But he could still taste Nancy's kisses on his lips, taste the apricot jam she put in the cookies, and he could smell the flour on her hands and the bread baking in her ovens. He could hear her pledge echoing in his ears.

He *would* be a baker. They would wed as soon as his apprenticeship was done. Their parents had already informally agreed to their courtship, but they couldn't formalize it until he learned his skill. His skill was going to be his life. And it was in the god's hands now.

"*Please don't let mine suck like that one did*, Max pleaded in his head as he heard the guild advisor shout out [Shepherd] for the young man who had just gotten his life's path chosen for him.

Max fervently began praying again as he waited in line behind the people before him.

Once a year, the adventurer guild brought the skill shard to each town, allowing everyone who had turned eighteen since their last visit to see what skill they would be given.

It had been four months since he turned eighteen, yet every day since the last time he had been here, all he could think about was getting the [Baker] skill. Since Nancy had received that skill last year, he wanted nothing more than to spend his days making things with her.

“Your sister is hoping you get something cool like swordsman or caster,” Caleb called out from behind him, breaking his train of thought.

Max shuddered at that thought as he heard Caleb start to chuckle. His body couldn’t stay still as the chills kept running through him at the thought of being an adventurer. It was hard to stand still between the need to piss and the fear of being a fighter. Not one to admit his cowardness, he preferred to be a lover and not a fighter. Or at least he had told Nancy that a thousand times.

Thankfully, only one out of every twenty humans was given a skill worthy of being an adventurer. Each race had different chances for skill selection, yet it seemed harder for the human race to receive a skill that gave them the adventurer path. No one knew why the other races were most often gifted with combat skills. Perhaps the gods were still punishing humans for the wars of the past. Most would be merchants, craftsmen, and workers.

“You still planning on joining the [Baker’s] guild?” Caleb asked as he nudged Max in the back. “Your sister told me you already had the initiation fee saved up.”

“Just like you are praying for the [Warriors] guild,” he shot back over his shoulder. “None of that really matters as long as we both end up with something. I’m just glad no one has been an *unskilled* this year.”

Ignoring the shiver that ran through him, Max glanced at the families lining the street, ignoring Caleb and his teasing. For the last mile on both sides of the road were all the townspeople and nobles with children who had turned eighteen, each in their best clothes, waiting to celebrate whatever skill their child received. Formal dresses, simple outfits, full-on suits, and the fancy getups the nobles wore were on display. Cheers were given when a child was bestowed with a skill that would give them a promising job and future. Loud applause and celebration could be heard for minutes when a person acquired a combat skill. Thankfully, no one had experienced the worst response today. The cries and wailing from a family when a child was led away after being listed as unskilled was a horrible thing he had only experienced twice.

Max ran his hands along the pleats of his best outfit, knowing there were no wrinkles since his mother had pressed it about a dozen times. He was trying to wipe the sweat that kept forming on his palms.

He spotted his sister, Stacy, off up ahead with his parents, standing on her tiptoes and smiling at him as he waited his turn. She wore that pink dress she loved because she caught his friend Caleb ogling at her when she wore it. The long hours she spent practicing with the town guard were evident by the muscles and shape of her body. He found himself smiling, knowing next year would be her turn. Her dream of being an adventurer and conquering the towers and dungeons since they were kids might finally come true. Thinking about that caused him to fidget in line.

I just want a skill that makes life easy. Please, gods, hear my prayer. No blacksmithing or farming. [Baker]!

His mind ran back to when he had gone to the temple and given a small offering the day before. The priests had laughed when they asked what he was praying for. Helping his father work all those long days caring for sheep had taught him he didn't want a job like that. The smell and constant noise had driven him crazy. Something indoors, perhaps a job crafting jewelry or even in a bank, would be okay if a bakery wasn't an option.

Most importantly, something without risk.

A loud roar of cheers snapped him out of his thoughts. Someone just got the [Scout] skill! He didn't recognize the boy up there, but Max could only imagine how jealous a few of the others in line would be. Too many people seemed to think a life of adventure would be grand.

Letting his mind wander to take it off the call of nature that seemed to overwhelm him, Max thought about how each child had to work in different trades from the age of thirteen. Exposure to all these things was believed to give them a better chance of success and the skill they desired. Nothing had ever really piqued his interest until he met Nancy and tasted her pastries. Glancing up at Phillip, who was still celebrating, he grinned, remembering when it was his turn in the blacksmith's forge had come up. Being sweaty and dirty was not his idea of a good time, so he had always found a way to leave early and relax elsewhere.

A push from behind came, and he turned. His best friend Caleb was smiling from ear to ear like a fool.

“That guy is so lucky. The [Scout] skill can set one for life,” Caleb groaned as he pointed at the next person moving to the stage. “I don’t know that one. Do you?”

Checking out who Caleb was talking about, Max didn’t recognize the well-dressed guy, but he knew it had to be a noble. The clothes he wore were far nicer than his. They were far nicer than most of the kids in line.

A sapphire blue suit with long tails in the back and those shiny black shoes made it easy to point out the difference between haves and have-nots.

“I’d bet he gets something cushy like the rest of them,” Max stated before groaning after hearing what the boy had received. “How the heck does that happen?”

“*Will of the gods*.” joked Caleb as he whispered his reply.

“[Administration] and [Banking]!” shouted the advisor once more to make sure everyone had heard. A huge grin ran across his face as he held the boy's hand in the air. The red robe that he wore almost matched the color of his face as he shouted.

Thunderous applause echoed across the courtyard and street as the crowd recognized the rarity of two skills.

“That’s like one in a hundred thousand,” hissed Caleb as he clapped his hands out of obligation. “Damn nobles! Always with the crazy crap, I swear the gods listen to their prayers more than ours, or something is off. It’s always like that!”

Max bobbed his head as he saw the blond-headed teen raise his hands toward the crowd. Two skills were almost unheard of. Everyone believed different things about how it appeared certain nobles always got better skills or the occasional double skill. The truth was only the nobles seemed to know, and they sure weren’t sharing.

“I guess we need to offer more to the temple if we want two skills,” mumbled Max as he frowned at Caleb. “That like sucks all the joy out of everyone else. Why not put that guy at the end of the line?”

He knew Caleb was nodding as they turned to watch the last six before him wait their turn. He searched the crowd and saw Nancy by his sister's side. Her green eyes were watching him, and he smiled. The combination of her red hair and yellow dress almost took his breath away. He would have stopped there and stared at her forever if Caleb hadn’t begun beating on his back for him to keep moving. She gave him a wink and blew him a kiss. He felt a smile running from ear to ear on his face when he noticed the basket she held in her hand. She had made celebration treats!

Please let me be a [Baker]! I’ll give twenty percent of all the money I make!

Unsure if his prayer was even heard, his foot almost tripped over the steps leading to the stone podium in the town center due to his lack of attention and how his legs seemed to be failing as he clenched his pelvic muscles tightly.

Caleb’s steady hand grabbed the back of his shirt, keeping him from falling over and looking like a fool before the entire town. Shaking his head, Max forced himself to focus. Now was not the time to think about eating desserts with Nancy.

“You’re dancing like you're going to piss yourself or pass out!” Caleb snapped at him from behind.

Looking over his shoulder, Max glared at him and saw Caleb start to chuckle.

Caleb’s head motion forced him to turn around, and he realized he was standing on the base of the platform. Looking forward, he saw the five representatives watching and waiting to see who might be given a skill worthy of their time. The back four looked half asleep as they stood almost motionless in their red robes. Their faces were blank as they gazed at the back of the only one actively doing anything. Even with their expressionless faces, something about them screamed danger.

An older man with maybe one hundred grey hairs on his head and enough wrinkles to prove he had seen a few things called out the skills as they were revealed from the shard. He would smile at every teen who came forward and whispered something before making them put their hands on both sides of the crystal shard.

Each time, the shard would change colors before it finally settled on one shade of something, and then somehow, the older man would get a notification in his status

screen, telling him what they had been given. Over the years, Max had seen him laugh, tell jokes, and even encourage the teen who had received a skill they did not want. The few times an individual had received no skill, he had quietly ushered them away to one of the four who were standing behind him.

Turning again, Max smiled at his parents, sister, and Nancy, waving and cheering for him.

“Please step forward,” the man informed him in a deep and precise voice. He flashed a toothy smile. “What is your name?”

“Max Hoste,” he replied, his voice cracking and making his face flush.

“No need to be worried, my boy,” the man stated with a wink as he motioned to the shard. “You have seen this done hundreds of times. Simply come close and put your hands on both sides and let's see what the gods have gifted you!”

Taking a deep breath, Max nodded and took the two steps required to approach the shard. As he prepared to put a hand on each side, he paused, noticing the courtyard was quiet. It never seemed quiet when anyone else had done this.

“The shard,” the older man whispered.

Bobbing his head, Max snapped out of the fog he had been in and put his hands on the clear shard of crystal.

It felt warm and smooth. Almost slick like ice and yet somehow warm like a fresh cake.

The shard began to flash dark colors before turning black and staying the color of night with no light.

Max glanced up from the shard, having never seen it this color before, and noticed the older man looking at him and the shard with a puzzled look. His eyebrows were raised, and one eye was cocked at him.

The other four behind the old man had lost their blank looks and were now staring at him and the shard.

If the courtyard had seemed quiet before, it was now like a graveyard as everyone waited to hear what this different color meant.

“What does your status say, boy?!” the older man exclaimed. His voice was low but gruff and able to strip off bark off a tree when he leaned in. “What skills do you have?”

Noticing the look on his face and how his two white eyebrows had become one, Max wasted no time checking.

Skills?

[Status Check]

*****

Max Hoste

18-Year-old Human Male

Level 1

Exp 0/1000

HP: 40/40

MP: 20/20

Stamina: 20/20

STR: 3

DEX: 4

CON: 4

INT: 4

WIS: 4

Skills:

Baker

Consume

*****

Max felt his chest suddenly become lighter than he could believe as he stared at the small status window he had summoned. It had been unlocked since he was thirteen, but nothing had ever shown up before besides the first two lines.

Now, there were two skills listed! [Baker] and something else he had never heard of.

What in the world is consume? Is that a skill to help him test food?

Smiling, he considered how cool that would be if it helped him grow as a renowned tester of some kind.

The sound of fingers snapping broke his shock as he saw old, spindly fingers before his face.

“What skill does it say!” the man exclaimed louder as he waved a hand at those behind him.

“Uh… it says…” Max trailed off as he watched the people moving toward him.

Max couldn’t speak as his voice failed him. His mind was racing, and things were moving so fast. Why were those four coming near him? That only happened when things were bad.

The man's face contorted, and he shook his head from side to side.

Motioning to a woman standing behind him, he whispered in her ear.

Glancing around the courtyard, Max realized everyone was staring at him and that his mother was crying. His dad was holding her back as she reached her hands out toward him and wept.

His sister’s face was white as snow as she stared at him. Glancing next to her, he noticed that Nancy was not there. The basket she had been holding was upside down on the street, and some muffins that he loved were crushed under the feet of those near it. Scanning the crowd, he saw a patch of red hair bobbing and weaving through the crowd, leaving the street.

Turning around, he saw Caleb looking at him with tears in his eyes.

“What is wrong?” Max asked Caleb as his friend pointed behind him.

“Unskilled! Unskilled!” The cry rose from the crowd, and Max turned around, confused as to why they would say that. As he turned, he saw the four people behind the older man moving toward him.

“Unskilled! Unskilled!” the cry echoed again all around him.

“Do not resist, and they will not strike you down before your family,” the older man stated as the men and women surrounded him. “If you fight, your family may die as well.”

Glancing at the older man, Max saw rage and anger burning in his eyes. It was like he had done something evil to this man every day of his life to earn a look like this.

Looking at the other four, he saw they each wore the same expression as the two on his side grabbed his arm and yanked him in the direction away from the crowd, his family, and friends.

“Why?” Max shouted at the four who were dragging him away. “I have a skill! Why…”

A fist, harder than any blow he had ever received, hit his jaw, causing his knees to buckle, and the world began to shimmer.

The woman who had struck him spoke in a hushed tone as they yanked him along.

“Put him in the cart, and we will deal with him once we are gone.”

The cart she was talking about was not that far away, and before they had thrown him into it, he was already lost to the looming darkness that beckoned him.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

*** Disclamer ***

Book 1, 2 & 3 Is on Kindle Unlimited / Amazon as of 2/23/2024

Due to their policy I have to take down the chapters.

You can read Book 1 - Shattered Dreams on Amazon.

You can read Book 2 - Shattered Limits on Amazon.

You can read Book 3 - Shattered Boundaries on Amazon.

Thank you again to everyone who supported me in this journey!

((updated 7/1/2024))

PAT 39 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 313

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390518 2024-12-06;

“Remember, the arena will not come into vision until thirty seconds before the fight starts. It will be exactly thirty seconds later that the bells will ring and you may move. Attempting to leave the spot you are standing on will result in pain you do not want to experience. Any last questions?”
Max shook his head at Quilazmore as he waited for the crystal disc he was standing on to move him to the arena floor.
“Well, nothing about what you just said. I do have one about the fight before me. How powerful were those two?”
The servant shrugged.
“Until I see you fight, I am not certain I can give you a true measurement of power. Just know they are not weak nor strong. Many are stronger and some are weaker. There are different pools of power, and as you move through one, you advance. Right now you are listed as the weakest pool, so either you will win or you will die.”

This elf must be a lot of fun. I know I have an attitude, but he has enough for both of us.
Max couldn't help but grin and nodded.
"Well, perhaps I can bet on myself?"
"With what? Last I checked there was no system of currency that you possessed, and Igarra did not mention you had anything. You could wager your necklace as I can sense power in it."
"I'll pass. Do I gain anything from winning?"
"There are prizes and our form of currency, yes. You gain a percentage of the wagers placed. Each rank has a higher percentage and also gains greater rewards. To win is to get stronger."
"And to lose is to die," Max chimed in.
"Exactly."
Quilazmore put his finger to his temple and gave a quick nod.
"Be ready. They are going to move you now, and please try to not throw up on the arena floor. While it doesn't damage it, most find that as a sign of weakness."
Before he could say anything, Max was bathed in light, and his Sonar went off, telling him that he had moved and was standing on uneven terrain that was mostly flat.
Around him, however, was a white tube of light, preventing him from actually seeing the arena floor.
Feels a bit like cheating, but I'll take it.
Be ready. Do not hesitate. We shall find out what we are facing, and will need to react quickly. I would wager they know more about us than we do about them.
Words filled his head, and Max grimaced at the volume of it.
"Our newest fighter, Ifrit, straight from Quan Ma and the last ring, attempts to do the impossible! Perhaps he shall rain down fire and destroy his opponent, or perhaps once again Khatwaili will leave its opponent a pile of lifeless mush!"
This time the roars and applause of the participants were able to be heard, still somewhat silenced but the variation of noise and pitch left no doubt there was a variety of species watching.
The tube of light vanished, and Max saw that the floor of the arena was a hodgepodge of cracked earth plates, rising up a few feet and occasionally dropping. It was flat for the most part, but lots of potential tripping areas were present on the gray stone surface.
A quarter of a mile away, just as with the last fight, was his opponent, and Max froze upon seeing it.
What in the gods is that?
That… is a brain… inside a mechanical robot…

I mean, yeah… I can see that, but why is the brain in its stomach? And why is that thing at least fifteen feet tall?
Even from the distance it was easy to see that his opponent was in a large robotic suit, but even the brain itself in its midsection was bigger than what must be usual.
What head did that come out of?
Focus… look at the robot.
Max nodded, seeing the metallic robot looked dangerous. Gone was the big and bulky type of automaton from the dwarf dungeon. Instead this was sleek, with no extra bulk. Two long blades came from each hand, and there were tubes on the arms as well as a pack of some kind on its back.
I'll try to use fire, see if I can burn the brain or perhaps cold even.
Whatever you do, be ready. Five seconds.
Bob was right, and the moment he knew time was up, the bells rang, and the robot raced toward him.
As it did a presence assaulted his mind, and Max almost bent over, feeling the barrage of something in his head.
It was like Fowl had a giant warhammer and was smashing over and over against his temples.
Fight it! Be ready, it's halfway here!
The pain! I'm trying!
[Formidable Mind]
The pain vanished, and his mind became clear.
As soon as it happened, the robot's charge turned into a skidding halt, stone sent in a spray as its metal legs and feet slid against the uneven surface.
Max didn't wait, his Fire Nova started its wind up, and he began casting a fireball, knowing how much time he had until both were going to go off.
Go!
Rocks flew from the pressure his boots created when Max took off running, charging Khatwaili.
As he got closer, he noticed there were a pair of eyes in the brain as well as lots of tentacles operating levers.
The robot began to move backward, both arms and the five-foot blades preparing for a defensive position as Max covered the distance in a moment.
His staff came across, and one of the blades parried as the other swiped at him.
Dodging under it, Max grinned, his Fire Nova about to go off, and his fireball which followed him grew larger.

A second before his spell cast, openings around the robot's leg opened up, and dozens of tiny darts began to stream from them, aimed at Max.
Cursing to himself, Max summoned an airwall, watching the first five get stopped, while the next one shattered it.
Waves began to roll out from his body, and the robot leaped up into the air, soaring at least twenty yards above, evading the flames, while metallic darts were still coming at Max.
Max summoned a stone wall and used his Stone Mastery to harden it, drawing from the very stone beneath his feet, watching as it held firm, growing thicker and causing the darts to bounce off.
His fireball raced toward the airborne robot, his mind calculating where it would land, and as it moved to intercept the big brain robot, a sudden gust of air came from behind, sending the robot back into the air and made his fireball miss completely.
Channeling lightning, Max waited, watching to see where the thing was going to come down as it moved to the right, putting distance between them.
Khatwaili pointed its left arm at Max, and one of the tubes glowed, then an object streaked across the sky at him.
Dancing behind the wall, Max's Sonar told him that the object was also moving, not coming right at him, but instead flying around the wall and toward him.
Another one came from Khatwaili's right arm and tube.
Sprinting away, Max felt the pair of objects giving chase, always turning to stay after him.
They were gaining on him, and only about ten seconds remained as he covered the distance of the arena at the edge of the barrier where stone just stopped.
Here goes nothing…
Bob didn't respond, but he knew it was the right decision, having seen how fast the objects tracked him. They turned but not quickly, and he didn't want to waste his lightning spell he was channeling inside him.
With five yards before the two objects were about to impact against him and the power of the invisible wall behind him, Max hoped his timing was right.
[Demonic Teleportation]
The explosion that came from their impact raced toward him, and Max summoned an ice wall, flames washing over it as he located Khatwaili again.
This thing is smart. I'm not certain how long it can stay airborne.

Racing toward the robotic monstrosity, Max began summoning rock shards from the ground, creating multiple dozens of sharp blades, and had them following him as he ran back toward the brain that hovered about seventy yards in the air.
“Foolish human! I shall—”
The voice of Khatwaili was so high pitched that it made Cordellia’s seem normal.
Ignoring the taunt, Max jumped up into the air, his stone blades serving as stepping spots as he climbed higher into the air, watching as the pair of eyes on the brain went wide, and it reacted. Instead of dodging, it came at him, blades ready, the object on its back providing speed as they aimed for one another.
A dozen stone blades raced ahead, coming from different sides to pin the robot in as it charged.
Both arms moved with surprising speed, destroying the rocks, and the ones that made it past them bounced off an invisible shield before the brain, who almost looked like it was smiling.
Max didn’t care. He had done what he needed to, and he unleashed the lightning that had been growing inside him.
A bolt three feet wide surged out from him, gone in a moment, and streaked toward Khatwaili.
It raised both arms, trying to block the attack, but when the spell connected, the robot reacted by spasming wildly, the object on its back sputtering.
Gone was the protective stance as Max drove off one of his remaining stone blades. Thrusting the pointed tip of his staff at the unprotected midsection where the brain was, smoke starting to rise from its pink flesh.
A squelching sound came as whatever barrier had stopped the stones wasn’t there, and the tender body of Khatwaili found itself impaled on a staff that began to radiate with fire.
“AHHHHH!”
Its cries came as both of them began to fall toward the ground, twisting in the air from the impact.
Still Max didn’t care as he focused the fire of his spell through the staff, watching as it burned the brain, seeing it shaking and those tentacles no longer grabbing on to any of the levers next to its body.
A loud crash came as the robot struck the ground first, twisting and causing Max to be thrown some, his weapon being yanked free.
Without giving Khatwaili a chance to react, Max summoned more stones, which grew like manacles, each one binding the robot's legs and arms to the ground and becoming heavier and larger with each passing second.

Max’s Fire Nova started again, and he ran back to the body, jumped on it, and plunged the staff over and over into the brain.
Cries and gurgles came from the pink blob, as liquid he assumed was blood of some kind ran free.
“I… can’t… be…”
The first wave of flames from his Fire Nova seared shut whatever mouth or hole made noise for Khatwaili. After that it unleashed a horrid high-pitched scream.
Suddenly it stopped, and Max felt a wave of cold that burned within his soul and mind.
[Bonus Stats Consumed]
[35 Intelligence Consumed]
[35 Wisdom Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Formidable Mind - Rare has been upgraded to Formidable Mind-Epic]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Skill does not match being’s system designation]
[Skill is being dele—]
[Consume has overwritten deletion]
[Would you like to learn [Robotics]?]
[Yes / No]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Would you like to learn [Omnilingualism]?]
[Yes / No]

Cheers came as Max leaned against his staff for some stability, still stuck in the pink blob.
MOVE NOW!

Unsure if it was him or Bob, Max’s body turned and ran, covering the distance of the arena to the far side as the robot he had been standing on started to shake.
Stone, ice, and an air wall all gathered before him at the far edge of the barrier, and he began forming more barriers with the stone he summoned.
A flash of light came, and heat raced across the arena, blowing everything away.
The pain of his skin starting to melt was the first thing he noticed.
[Regeneration]
Even with the barriers, his body was assaulted by something that wanted to melt his flesh, a mushroom of fire rising inside the dome.
As his body fought to stay alive, a tube of light surrounded him.
Relief came as he felt himself back in his box, sensing the presence of the tiny dark elf.
“Don’t worry, we’ll take care of the radiation,” Quilazmore said.

40 Chapter 314

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1977419/chapter-314 2025-01-16;

Chapter 314
“I’m impressed,” Quilazmore repeated as he took the empty flask that Max held out for him. “Not only did you kill one of those, but you managed to survive their final gift.”
“Shouldn’t you mention to me or someone else that they do that upon death?”
Shrugging, the elf stored the flask.
“No. Part of all this is the unknown. Take you for example,” the servant said as he watched Max’s body heal the burnt sections of his skin. “Had I known you could do everything you did, I might have bet on you. Regardless, you’re a celebrity in some small way. Many here are excited at your next fights and what is to come. Even better are those who want to meet you. That is the real chance for growth.”
Max saw how Quilazmore was grinning, his purple teeth displayed again.
That one looks creepy.
Yes… still, we need to talk first.
“So now what? I return back to the place Igarra gave me?”
“No,” snorted his escort. “You have value. As such, you will be given a new place. If you will follow me, I shall transport you there. And before you ask, someone will find your companion and ensure they make it as well.”
***
Max wanted to explore the larger home he had been given. Three floors, large rooms to sleep in, eat in, use the restroom in, as well as pool of some sort that Quilazmore had said would ease his pain.
The greatest room, however, was a small one that could help reset skills with cooldown timers.
How does this work?
I’m not sure, but we need to talk. Forget this room and sit down. What we need to consider is important.
Grunting, Max moved away from the crystal room that was only a little bigger than him and found a chair, plopping into it, and closed his eyes.

Ok, tell me what you're thinking, Bob.
Something like a sigh came through his mind.
Accept the last skill only. Do not accept the other.
Why?
You trust me? Correct?
Grumbling, Max nodded and selected yes.
[Skill Description - Omnilingualism]
*****
Omnilingualism - Legendary - You understand almost all languages within the system. The ability to speak them is not granted. Languages which your vocal cords can correctly produce may be spoken. The granting of this skill includes the ability to read and write if your body can produce the written language.
*****
Max felt his mind expand, and things he had once glanced at now made sense. All the books he had stared at as Tanila read, unsure what they said, beckoned to him, knowing now he could read them.
That is a powerful skill. Far greater than what you might think it is worth. Be careful, and do not tip your hand that you can understand everything someone says. Those who are foolish to speak, not knowing what you might hear, will find themselves sharing things that might save us one day.
I... So...
Breathe. I know what you are thinking, and yes it is a lot to take in. Now listen. You need to let me absorb the other skill. Do not take it. The power it will grant is best served helping me evolve, but if you were to acquire it, you may stand out even more in the system.
Frowning, Max knew Bob was right.
It feels weird though, not taking a skill... like I am preventing myself from something great. Imagine if I had been able to build a robot like the one that brain had. What would that allow us to do?
Paint a target on our backs. No one would be foolish to believe for a moment you knew that ability before that fight. Our secret would be revealed in this world. We are not ready for that yet, and you know it.
Fine... take it .
[Consume is Consuming a skill]
[Robotics - Legendary has been Consumed]
[Power stored for future use]
HOLY ELF TITS! A legendary skill?!
A sensation of excitement came from within.
Yes. I knew it was strong. I could sense it, but even I did not know it was legendary grade. That was so much more than any other skill has provided in a while. We may find I evolve sooner than later if this keeps up.
So now what?
Wait for your companion to arrive. See what we might acquire of value, and then schedule our next fight.
***
Jazzjak's nose twitched almost as much as his ears upon arriving at the new home. It took the vorpal rabbit a good bit to calm down, overly excited at how the fight had gone and the promotion it brought with it.
"You don't understand!" he exclaimed. "I mean, I don't fully understand everything yet, but from what I have learned, you are going to be happy with the rewards!"
Max watched as the rabbit danced in the kitchen, bouncing between the cooking pot and the vegetables it was cutting up.
"What I want to know is what those tokens will do. What can I use them for?"
"I would say armor, but I'm not sure if you have enough for anything that might protect you better than your own skin. Though I'm surprised your hair somehow managed to survive the explosion. I saw a replay, and it looked pretty bad."
Max ran a hand through his unkempt mop of hair.

Maybe I should cut this…
“Regardless you can buy some supplies or potions, or perhaps crafting materials. It’s not a lot in this area, simply for smaller things. If you keep winning, that’s where the real power comes from.”
“And the rewards Quilazmore mentioned?”
“Skill shards. Nothing I think you would want yet or need. Anything, though, might be worth it if you can absorb it.”
“Like what kind of skill shards?”
Pausing from his cutting, Jazzjak tapped the tip of the knife against his chin.
“Maybe some small stat shards, or perhaps a language shard or two. Again, I’m not completely certain, but they have value. Some will trade for them, offering items, or knowledge. Remember this place is far different than I ever imagined. You and I are both learning about it.”
As the rabbit got back to work making dinner, Max considered what his companion was telling him.
I’m going to assume we can’t craft anything unless someone is willing to let me try my hand… then again, do I want that kind of exposure?
Most likely not. You are already on a path we cannot hide from. Eventually we have to assume that Ezreal will find you.
Frowning, Max moved to the stairs and headed up to the second floor where the crystal room was and sat down in it, feeling energy flow into him.
Be honest. Am I anywhere close to being able to fight him?
No… you’re closer, but right now, I’m afraid we’re too slow. Perhaps if we could access your equipment, but that’s not possible right now.
And asking for help to remove the collar isn’t an option.
I would assume not. If you trust Jazzjak, you can ask him, but even then… You may need to rewrap more material around it sooner than later. I cannot see how you look, but I can feel the metal against part of your skin.
Without waiting, Max reached up and started to touch the leather he had wrapped around it to make it appear like a choker. The cool metal touched his hands, and a piece of leather snapped off.
That’s not good…
Sitting there in the room, Max stared out at the hallway across from him and considered something.
He focused on the stone wall and felt it was way harder than he had anticipated, trying to draw some of the material away from it.
It’s been shaped by a skill higher than yours. I’m not certain you can do that. Though the idea is good.
Leaving the room, Max returned to where Jazzjak was.
“When dinner is over can you do me a favor and get me some stone that is strong but also easy to control?”
The vorpal bunny cocked his head, his left ear falling over halfway.
“I can… how much do you need?”
“About this much,” Max replied as he held his hands about a foot apart and made a box.
“Okay. Let me finish up, and I’ll see what I can find.”
As the rabbit turned to finish dinner, Max heard him speaking and sensed it was his skill and not the ring translating for him.
“ *Who knew I’d go from a fearless killer to a father and now simply a servant who cooks and fetches stuff… probably my wife…”*
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That fight wasn’t one that went our way. Smart thinking, though.
Glancing at the insect he had just slain, Max saw the other half of his arm jammed into its jaw and throat. Those pincers had sliced through in just a few bites after his Armored Warrior and Bulwark had worn off. Still, it had allowed him to reach the tender flesh inside the beast.
That exoskeleton shrugged off everything we threw at it. I really need to get a new weapon…
A silver disc appeared under him, and the tube of light surrounded him, bringing him back to his much larger box.
“Nice work!” Jazzjak called out as a cough came from Quilazmore.
“Would you like to purchase an item or potion to heal that injury? I can deduct it from your current winnings, or we can sell off a reward.”
“No thanks,” Max said as he waved the bloody stump in the air. “We already have something that will heal it, and for now, I’m ready to return home. Can you have the tokens and items delivered tonight?”
“I can. Anything else?”
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[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
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PAT 40 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 314

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390516 2024-12-10;

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“Perhaps I should get an apron to go with my suit.”
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[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
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[Evasion - Rare has been upgraded to Evasion - Epic]
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Max sat on the small crystal bench, watching as his fingers finished forming, gazing between them and his notifications.
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41 Chapter 315

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1982121/chapter-315 2025-01-16;

[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 421/1000
Tower Experience: 40.00%
HP: 21,840/21,840
MP: 9520/9520
Stamina: 5460/5460
STR: 1038
DEX: 997
CON: 1092
INT: 952
WIS: 920
Defense of the Dragon - 20.0%
Defense of the Demon - 20.0%
Demon Essence: - 218
Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase
Merfolk King's Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement
Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase
Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase
Legendary Elemental Staff - 100 INT/WIS 25% Bonus to Elemental Spells
*****
Twisting the staff in his hands, Max couldn't help but smile as he walked down the street, nodding at everyone who stared at him.
Between these few items...
Imagine if we could unlock the rest of your equipment.
[Skill Description - Spell Burst]
*****
Spell Burst - Rare Skill: Next offensive skill cast will deal twice as much damage. Spell costs 3x as much mana. 1 Day Cooldown.
*****
I'm glad when she hit me with that stone spell it only broke both arms and most of my ribs... Still it's a nice skill to have.
Yes… For most casters, having to use three times the mana would be a difficult thing. For you… not as much.
Saying nothing, Max continued to listen to the conversations of those he heard around him.
"That's the one they call Ifrit... strange for a humanoid to be so strong..."
"Surely, he won't make it soon. Look at the fool. He doesn't protect his heart with a covering... unless perhaps his heart is actually in his pants where the armor is..."
"Perhaps he would like to try to sire some of our children..."
Coughing, he choked on nothing but his own spit as a pair of mantises had just spoken about him siring their children.
I doubt that would go well for you, but perhaps you could regrow your head.
Yeah... that's not going to happen...
Eventually, he made it down the maze of streets, knowing where he was headed, and stood before a shop that was different from the rest.
Unlike so many, which had fancy signs that moved or flashed drawing people to them, this one was a simple metal door set between two other storefronts. An image of a bearded dwarf holding a hammer while sitting on an anvil was all that told him this was the shop he wanted.
Who would imagine a dwarf would be here.
Please… those are some of the greatest when it comes to forging weapons, no matter what world you are on.

A bell jingled as he pushed the metal door in, and a shimmering portal washed over him as he stepped through.
Everyone has these small dimensional pockets…
Gone was the small shop's outer appearance; now, a fifty-by-fifty-foot room was present, with a pair of twin dwarven girls talking with two other clients, both covered by the magical cloaks that hid their presence.
Perhaps we should get one… only two more fights before we can afford one.
Or not… that cloak will not hide who you are, just where you are going, and from what you and I both know, no one is going to attack you in the street. There is too much power being traded here. I can feel the flows of this place, and after the last few fights and the power we have gained, realize that this is a trading hub of sorts for lesser beings… or perhaps I should say, those who have outgrown their world but are not able to compete in the system as a whole.
And you still don't remember what it takes to bridge that gap?
No… it will come, or you will achieve it, and then we both will know. Just remember, not every world is the same. What it takes to leave one world will be different depending on how they are set up. Imagine—
"Excuse me sir, it's Ifrit, right?"
The sound of a dwarven woman caused Max to focus on the beaming face of a six-foot-tall dwarf. She was about as muscular as most men he had seen, and a scar ran down her uncovered arm. A red beard was twisted in tight braids, tucked under a blackened apron.
Silver eyes studied him as she smiled.
"It is… are you Buwingrid?"
"I am," she replied, winking at him. "It would appear by how your eyes are as big as a piece of sunfire ore that you were expecting a man."
Clearing his throat, Max ignored Bob laughing in the background of his mind.
"I might have been led to believe you were one, but that doesn't bother me at all. My favorite dwarf is a woman, a healer in fact, and her husband is…" Max's throat locked up as the words he started to speak caught in his throat. "Her husband is my best friend. He is a warrior and from a family of armor and weaponsmiths."
Laughing loudly, the dwarven woman held out her hand and gave his a firm shake, smiling even more when he didn't flinch as she squeezed hard.
"So tell me what I can do for you. I must say I have been impressed watching you in the fights. You are skilled in magic, and I can sense your staff has some strong enchantments. Even more, I can tell it is bonded to you."
Blinking a few times, Max saw her grin as she continued on.
"I'm older than you might expect and have been around a long time. My ability to make the weapons I do has allowed me to gain even more knowledge of what is possible across all the worlds. Now tell me, what is it you are looking for?"
"I need a melee weapon. If possible, I prefer a halberd, but I can use any melee weapon. Right now I'd like to focus on strength, agility, and constitution."
Buwingrid began to chuckle as she motioned to a worked stone counter at the far end of the main room.
"So you cast spells, hit like a bushamol, and now want a melee weapon? Should I expect your next stop will be an armorer?"
Smiling, Max followed her and shrugged.
"Tokens are my limiting thing right now. While armor is good, I prefer to minimize getting hit, and after facing that last opponent, it became evident that I need to acquire something able to penetrate a hard shell or armor. On a side note, what is a bush… bushomel…"
"Bushamol," she answered with a wink. "Where I am from, they are about thirty feet high, don't have a lick of hair on their bodies, and have a fist that is about eight feet wide. When one punches something, they often destroy it completely. Thankfully, they are peaceful unless you manage to piss them off… then they aren't."

As she spoke, she pulled a large piece of paper out from under the counter and set it down. From behind her ear, she retrieved a pencil.
“Now tell me, do you have any ideas on how you want this designed? Length wise? Balance wise?”
It was Max’s turn to grin as he held out his hand.
“Seriously?”
He nodded at her, and she sighed, giving him the pencil and watching Max pull the paper closer to him.
Letting his skill take control, Max began sketching out the weapon he had in his mind. After so many different ones over the years, he knew what he liked.
The handle ran from the ground to the tip of his head.
Who knew that I would be content with a weapon so small.
Because you do not fight like most. While a true halberd using warrior wants that added reach, you prefer to get in close, using your body also.
Smiling, Max sketched the head of the weapon, the length of the pointed tip and the size of the hammer on the other side.
Minutes passed as his mind finished the initial sketch, and then he looked up, seeing an appreciative nod coming from Buwingrid.
“You’re able to enchant as well?”
“What kind of weaponsmith would I be if that wasn’t possible?”
“Elemental essences? Power cores? Life and mana infusements? Runes?”
The dwarf’s head twitched a few times, and even through her red beard a frown formed slightly.
“Why is it I’m about to ask a question I don’t think I want the answer to?”
“Because I’m trying to do this on the down low and would like to potentially have a hand in what you create.”
Buwingrid’s frown grew deeper, and both eyes narrowed.
“You can craft weapons?” she whispered.
“I can. Though I have no doubt your skill is higher than mine.”
“I would hope so!” she exclaimed, quickly checking to see that the pair of visitors with the twins were not paying them attention. “What can you do?”
“As I told the last weaponsmith who let me work in their shop with them, perhaps it is always better if I show you what I can do.”
She frowned, biting her lip as silver eyes studied the man on the other side of the counter.
“You say you have dwarven friends… tell me… what is something special to them?”
“Besides ale, gold, the one they love, family, a fiftieth birthday, protecting—”
“Enough! Okay, it’s evident you either have them or you did some research. Give me a moment to think.”
Max nodded as the weaponsmith stood there.
As she did, he drew the paper closer and began sketching again. This time he did a close-up version of the shaft, drawing runes he knew she would understand for power and strength. Next, he did a rough outline of the weapon head, creating lines and potential runes and other designs he had learned from Romandis. Time passed, and Max could sense Buwingrid leaning close, felt her eyes widen with his Sonar skill.
When he finally finished and about twenty minutes had passed, the woman had barely breathed for most of the time he was bent over.
“That… that weapon… you designed that right now in your head…”
“And there are many more. I’m assuming you have access to lots of parts and powerful items, things I can’t come close to acquiring yet, but together… I would be willing to share what I know and in turn learn from you.”
Max watched as she slid a hand between her apron and saw her chin jerk a few times, trying not to smile as he noticed she was tugging on her beard.
“There will be rules,” Buwingrid blurted out as she let go of her braids. “This is my forge, and no one will know you are working here. To do so would tarnish my reputation and potentially cause others to want to get the same kind of treatment. Do you understand?”

Max nodded.
Letting out a sigh, the dwarf turned and motioned for him to join her.
“Brendalla and Trendalla, I’ll be back. Our newest patron would like to inspect the forge and verify I have the materials needed for his order.”
Both girls glanced up at the same time, their silver eyes gave a quizzical look as they cocked their heads for a second before nodding.
“Let’s go.”
Following the weaponsmith, he moved past crystal-covered cases with weapons on display behind the counter. So many different ones that he recognized and at least two dozen that he didn’t. His mind called out to want to touch them and inspect them.
At the back of the room stood a simple wooden door. It was green, and when Buwingrid touched it, it swung open with a creak, leading to another small shimmering portal.
“Don’t touch anything, or I’ll cut your hands off,” she muttered before going first.
Never touch a dwarf’s beard or their forge… that is what Fowl said.
I’m pretty sure it was to never touch a dwarf’s beard, beer, or forge, but you’re probably right.

PAT 41 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 315

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390514 2024-12-10;

[Status Check]

*****

Max Hoste

18-Year-old Human Male

Level 1

Exp 421/1000

Tower Experience: 40.00%

HP: 21,840/21,840

MP: 9520/9520

Stamina: 5460/5460

STR: 1038

DEX: 997

CON: 1092

INT: 952

WIS: 920

Defense of the Dragon - 20.0%

Defense of the Demon - 20.0%

Demon Essence: - 218

Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase

Merfolk King’s Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement

Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase

Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase

Legendary Elemental Staff - 100 INT/WIS 25% Bonus to Elemental Spells

*****

Twisting the staff in his hands, Max couldn’t help but smile as he walked down the street, nodding at everyone who stared at him.

Between these few items…

Imagine if we could unlock the rest of your equipment.

[Skill Description - Spell Burst]

*****

Spell Burst - Rare Skill: Next offensive skill cast will deal twice as much damage. Spell costs 3x as much mana. 1 Day Cooldown.

*****

I'm glad when she hit me with that stone spell it only broke both arms and most of my ribs… Still it's a nice skill to have.

Yes… For most casters, having to use three times the mana would be a difficult thing. For you… not as much.

Saying nothing, Max continued to listen to the conversations of those he heard around him.

"That's the one they call Ifrit… strange for a humanoid to be so strong…"

"Surely, he won't make it soon. Look at the fool. He doesn't protect his heart with a covering… unless perhaps his heart is actually in his pants where the armor is…"

"Perhaps he would like to try to sire some of our children…"

Coughing, he choked on nothing but his own spit as a pair of mantises had just spoken about him siring their children.

I doubt that would go well for you, but perhaps you could regrow your head.

Yeah… that's not going to happen…

Eventually, he made it down the maze of streets, knowing where he was headed, and stood before a shop that was different from the rest.

Unlike so many, which had fancy signs that moved or flashed drawing people to them, this one was a simple metal door set between two other storefronts. An image of a bearded dwarf holding a hammer while sitting on an anvil was all that told him this was the shop he wanted.

Who would imagine a dwarf would be here.

Please… those are some of the greatest when it comes to forging weapons, no matter what world you are on.

A bell jingled as he pushed the metal door in, and a shimmering portal washed over him as he stepped through.

Everyone has these small dimensional pockets…

Gone was the small shop's outer appearance; now, a fifty-by-fifty-foot room was present, with a pair of twin dwarven girls talking with two other clients, both covered by the magical cloaks that hid their presence.

Perhaps we should get one… only two more fights before we can afford one.

Or not… that cloak will not hide who you are, just where you are going, and from what you and I both know, no one is going to attack you in the street. There is too much power being traded here. I can feel the flows of this place, and after the last few fights and the power we have gained, realize that this is a trading hub of sorts for lesser beings… or perhaps I should say, those who have outgrown their world but are not able to compete in the system as a whole.

And you still don’t remember what it takes to bridge that gap?

No… it will come, or you will achieve it, and then we both will know. Just remember, not every world is the same. What it takes to leave one world will be different depending on how they are set up. Imagine—

“Excuse me sir, it’s Ifrit, right?”

The sound of a dwarven woman caused Max to focus on the beaming face of a six-foot-tall dwarf. She was about as muscular as most men he had seen, and a scar ran down her uncovered arm. A red beard was twisted in tight braids, tucked under a blackened apron.

Silver eyes studied him as she smiled.

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42 Chapter 316

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1984008/chapter-316 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[Shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/101895/oakthorn]

Chapter 316
The temperature changed the moment he passed through the portal, and it felt like flames were about to engulf him.
Max’s Sonar heard the ringing out of a hammer on metal, and as he blinked twice, his skill told him there was a ten-foot-tall dwarf hammering about thirty yards away on an anvil twice the size he was used to.
“Who’s that!” a feminine voice called out, the sound of the hammering stopping for a moment.
“No one that matters to you mother! Get back to work! We got things to finish!”
The dwarf got back to work, each strike shaping a two-foot section of metal with precision that amazed Max.
“She’s building a shaft that large? How big—”
“No questions, not right now!”
Buwingrid began moving toward a section on the left, where some shimmering walls of something seemed to send off heat waves.
Leading him to it, she passed through, and Max followed, feeling the heat of the room vanish as a cold chill washed over him.
“Everything here is in a dimensional pocket. Don’t touch these chests, or you won’t like what happens. They are all attuned to just me and my mother.”
Nodding, Max watched as she began grabbing a few from the cut-out section of the stone. There were at least fifty chests, each one stacked upon the other, set in a small alcove.
“You have this many? That is… impressive.”
“Is it? I could get more, but then again I have been in this place for hundreds of years.”
Her words almost made him choke at knowing she had been in this section of the city for so long.
This is what I thought then… a trading hub.
Each of those chests, though… for them to work in this space means they are a different kind of power.
Max immediately began to try to imagine how much money all of the chests must have cost. Normal dimensional storage items, he learned, did not work here. The interference of the pockets of dimensional space that this place operated in kept them from working.
People, creatures, and everyone else could not just simply appear here, unless they had a skill far greater than what Igarra had in place around this section of the world. That was why the places in the sky were needed. They served as a portal to this place, then requiring the visitor to get a special band if they flew to cross through a

barrier in the sky or ride down one of the elevators that transported people to the surface.
It would appear business has been very good for Buwingrid.
As he and Bob chatted, the dwarf had set multiple chests on a long counter and began opening them, pulling out different materials and setting them along a thirty-foot black stone counter, sometimes fidgeting and ensuring that each thing she pulled out stayed a certain distance from other items.
When she finished, over forty objects rested on the counter, and the woman gave a nod.
“Let’s see what you can do. Inspect all the objects, but do not move them from where they are. Some will not tolerate getting too close to the others.”
Max didn’t wait, excited at what he was about to see, and moved to the first section where five different blocks of metal were lined up in a row.
Each one seemed to sing its praises to him, and he glanced at Buwingrid while pointing at one.
“Can I hold them?”
After she gave him the go ahead, he began picking them up, feeling the weight of each ingot and letting his skill speak to him.
Without intending to, he began to rearrange them, and chuckled after realizing what he had done.
“These two would be the best for what I want,” Max stated as he touched a white ingot and a purple one. “The last one feels weird… and I don’t think it would be useful for anything I know of, but there is power in it.”
Buwingrid didn’t reply and simply nodded before motioning with her hand to continue his inspection of the items.
Over and over he studied different ones, finding crystal jars filled with liquid that he knew had something in them that might lend aid to his crafting, but he couldn’t understand what they were at all.
Every world has different ingredients for making things. I can sense the power as you can from them, but what they do, I have no idea.
Bob was right, and sitting the jars back down, he smiled and moved on.
When it was all over, Max was impressed with the nine different sections of ingredients the dwarf had put out.
He recognized some of them, and two had surprised him.
One was a power core that was different from any he had seen. It was a legendary grade one, and his skill told him that it would be a potential item to use with the dragon’s tooth.
The other was an elemental essence that contained all the elements. It wasn’t like the other five, which were twice the size and gave off more energy. Instead, it was small, barely the size of a walnut, and gave off almost no light, but within was immense potential.
“I’m impressed,” Buwingrid said as she moved along the counter. “You know your material, and the fact you know what a power core is was surprising. Tell me, do you have any ideas on how much it would cost to make what you desire with all these items you selected?”
“Far more than I own… I do have some skill shards that are of no use to me, but I doubt you would want them as anything but potential trading materials.”
Waving her hand, Buwingrid frowned.
“There are very few skill shards that I would even bother to attempt to touch. You do realize that trying to absorb them without ensuring they are a match for your entity or race is a quick way to die?”
Max nodded.
Oh… I’m well aware of how painful that can be.
Bob laughed, and Max recalled the first attempt where he tried to absorb a shard Jazzjak had given him from the second battle. The Molting skill shard hadn’t felt great to absorb, requiring Max to plunge it into his chest. Consume hadn’t been able to convert it to a usable skill but had simply absorbed the power as always.

“Well that proves you are smarter than most,” Buwingrid said. “Now then, let’s talk about this weapon and what you can do. I’m familiar with some of the other items that you passed by. While I have power cores, I’m unable to access them, as my world doesn’t use them, and none who have that knowledge want to share it. Are dwarves from your world trained in them?”
“It’s a very secretive skill,” Max replied. “Let’s just say very few know I have it, and most of the dwarves would probably be upset that a human possessed it.”
She snorted as she moved to the jars with liquid inside them.
“Very well, let me share with you what I know, you can tell me about your tricks, and we can find a way to help each other.”
Smiling, Max moved to stand beside her, for once feeling a bit of hope about things to come.
***
“Buwingrid is a woman? Interesting,” Jazzjak muttered between bites. “No one told me that. Forgive me for not knowing.”
“Not your fault,” Max replied as he chewed on the roasted vegetables, trying to figure out the sweet and savory spice the vorpal rabbit had somehow found. “I’m going to be spending some time with her for the next few days. Tell me, how goes the trading?”
Grinning, the white ball of fur set his plate down and dashed out of the dining area and up the stairs. A minute later he returned with two green gems in his hand.
“Two agility stat gems. They’re minor ones with only a ten to twenty bonus to each. I still can’t believe people charge so much for them.”
Jazzjak dropped the pair in Max’s hand, and a sensation of energy flowed through his skin.
Swirls of light moved inside the two-inch gem like a cyclone of energy and power.
“You’re certain those are worth it? I mean… if I’m honest, we lost out some of the value trading all your other shards for those.”
“It is. As you know, stats are important.”
Shrugging, the rabbit hopped back into his chair and grabbed his plate, digging into the barely cooked meat he had left sitting on it.
“I do, but I also know that eventually you’re going to need to find more skills. Those are the real power.”
He has no idea…
***
Sitting on the crystal bench, Max took the knife he had purchased and took a deep breath.
This always feels so weird… stabbing myself.
Well if you didn’t choke on the gem, you could swallow it…
Yeah… I can’t swallow… sorry…
With one more breath, Max pressed the tip of the blade under his sternum and cut down. The pain was not horrible, but the sensation was weird, feeling skin, tendons, and flesh parting.
Taking the first skill stone, he pressed it in and used his thumb to jam it deeper inside.
[Regeneration]
Closing his eyes, he set the knife on the seat next to him and relaxed.
Warmth spread through his body, and the tingling sensation began to get warmer.
Be ready…
Like last time, Bob knew right before the process really started, and two seconds after he had spoken it felt like a mountain slammed into his chest.
Gasping for air, pain surged outward, flooding his veins and running to every inch of flesh he owned.
Even his brain hurt, a throbbing sensation that moved to his eyes.
Though it lasted barely fifteen seconds, it felt like a good ten minutes, yet just as quickly as the moment had gone it was gone.
[13 Dexterity Acquired]

[Dexterity Gem Absorbed]
[Ten minutes till another Gem may be absorbed]
Taking a deep breath, Max let it out slowly.
[Base Dexterity Stat Check]
*****
Dexterity: 498
*****
Of course… just a few points shy.
The gods can't always love you, can they? In the meantime, tell me, do you plan on fighting before or after you get this weapon you are helping to craft?
I think we need to wait. Every day there are fights, and since it appears beings come as word reaches them of who is fighting, why risk it. Seven more fights, and then we can move to the real power, if you're correct.
That real power brings more opportunities to die. Do not forget the truth of that. If only you could enter the tower and see what lies inside.
Perhaps… though I'm not certain Igarra would allow that.
When the time came, Max repeated the process with the gem, finally getting the notification he had been hoping for.
[18 Dexterity Acquired]
[Dexterity Gem Absorbed]
[Stat Milestone 2 Reached]
[Dexterity of 500 acquired]
[Bonus speed and evasion granted - 50% speed increase]
[Bonus attack speed granted - 50% increase to all attack speeds]
[Rest required for final Milestone upgrade]
Finally…
Well done. You never cease to amaze me, Max, with how you manage to improve. It would appear we are in the best place to rest.
Closing his eyes, Max couldn't help but smile, as Bob was right.
I'll trust you to keep an eye out, then, while I sit here.
Trust me, I've never stopped watching over you, except for a few times when I couldn't.
Letting his breathing slow down, Max fell asleep, his mind leaving this world and joining the one where his friends were.

PAT 42 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 316

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390662 2024-12-11;

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“Let’s see what you can do. Inspect all the objects, but do not move them from where they are. Some will not tolerate getting too close to the others.”
Max didn’t wait, excited at what he was about to see, and moved to the first section where five different blocks of metal were lined up in a row.
Each one seemed to sing its praises to him, and he glanced at Buwingrid while pointing at one.
“Can I hold them?”
After she gave him the go ahead, he began picking them up, feeling the weight of each ingot and letting his skill speak to him.
Without intending to, he began to rearrange them, and chuckled after realizing what he had done.
“These two would be the best for what I want,” Max stated as he touched a white ingot and a purple one. “The last one feels weird… and I don’t think it would be useful for anything I know of, but there is power in it.”
Buwingrid didn’t reply and simply nodded before motioning with her hand to continue his inspection of the items.
Over and over he studied different ones, finding crystal jars filled with liquid that he knew had something in them that might lend aid to his crafting, but he couldn’t understand what they were at all.
Every world has different ingredients for making things. I can sense the power as you can from them, but what they do, I have no idea.
Bob was right, and sitting the jars back down, he smiled and moved on.
When it was all over, Max was impressed with the nine different sections of ingredients the dwarf had put out.
He recognized some of them, and two had surprised him.
One was a power core that was different from any he had seen. It was a legendary grade one, and his skill told him that it would be a potential item to use with the dragon’s tooth.
The other was an elemental essence that contained all the elements. It wasn’t like the other five, which were twice the size and gave off more energy. Instead, it was small, barely the size of a walnut, and gave off almost no light, but within was immense potential.
“I’m impressed,” Buwingrid said as she moved along the counter. “You know your material, and the fact you know what a power core is was surprising. Tell me, do you have any ideas on how much it would cost to make what you desire with all these items you selected?”

“Far more than I own… I do have some skill shards that are of no use to me, but I doubt you would want them as anything but potential trading materials.”
Waving her hand, Buwingrid frowned.
“There are very few skill shards that I would even bother to attempt to touch. You do realize that trying to absorb them without ensuring they are a match for your entity or race is a quick way to die?”
Max nodded.
Oh… I’m well aware of how painful that can be.
Bob laughed, and Max recalled the first attempt where he tried to absorb a shard Jazzjak had given him from the second battle. The Molting skill shard hadn’t felt great to absorb, requiring Max to plunge it into his chest. Consume hadn’t been able to convert it to a usable skill but had simply absorbed the power as always.
“Well that proves you are smarter than most,” Buwingrid said.
“Now then, let’s talk about this weapon and what you can do. I’m familiar with some of the other items that you passed by. While I have power cores, I’m unable to access them, as my world doesn’t use them, and none who have that knowledge want to share it. Are dwarves from your world trained in them?”
“It’s a very secretive skill,” Max replied. “Let’s just say very few know I have it, and most of the dwarves would probably be upset that a human possessed it.”
She snorted as she moved to the jars with liquid inside them.
“Very well, let me share with you what I know, you can tell me about your tricks, and we can find a way to help each other.”
Smiling, Max moved to stand beside her, for once feeling a bit of hope about things to come.
***
“Buwingrid is a woman? Interesting,” Jazzjak muttered between bites. “No one told me that. Forgive me for not knowing.”
“Not your fault,” Max replied as he chewed on the roasted vegetables, trying to figure out the sweet and savory spice the vorpal rabbit had somehow found. “I’m going to be spending some time with her for the next few days. Tell me, how goes the trading?”
Grinning, the white ball of fur set his plate down and dashed out of the dining area and up the stairs. A minute later he returned with two green gems in his hand.
“Two agility stat gems. They’re minor ones with only a ten to twenty bonus to each. I still can’t believe people charge so much for them.”
Jazzjak dropped the pair in Max’s hand, and a sensation of energy flowed through his skin.

Swirls of light moved inside the two-inch gem like a cyclone of energy and power.
“You’re certain those are worth it? I mean… if I’m honest, we lost out some of the value trading all your other shards for those.”
“It is. As you know, stats are important.”
Shrugging, the rabbit hopped back into his chair and grabbed his plate, digging into the barely cooked meat he had left sitting on it.
“I do, but I also know that eventually you’re going to need to find more skills. Those are the real power.”
He has no idea…
***
Sitting on the crystal bench, Max took the knife he had purchased and took a deep breath.
This always feels so weird… stabbing myself.
Well if you didn’t choke on the gem, you could swallow it…
Yeah… I can’t swallow… sorry…
With one more breath, Max pressed the tip of the blade under his sternum and cut down. The pain was not horrible, but the sensation was weird, feeling skin, tendons, and flesh parting.
Taking the first skill stone, he pressed it in and used his thumb to jam it deeper inside.
[Regeneration]
Closing his eyes, he set the knife on the seat next to him and relaxed.
Warmth spread through his body, and the tingling sensation began to get warmer.
Be ready…
Like last time, Bob knew right before the process really started, and two seconds after he had spoken it felt like a mountain slammed into his chest.
Gasping for air, pain surged outward, flooding his veins and running to every inch of flesh he owned.
Even his brain hurt, a throbbing sensation that moved to his eyes.
Though it lasted barely fifteen seconds, it felt like a good ten minutes, yet just as quickly as the moment had gone it was gone.
[13 Dexterity Acquired]
[Dexterity Gem Absorbed]
[Ten minutes till another Gem may be absorbed]
Taking a deep breath, Max let it out slowly.
[Base Dexterity Stat Check]
*****
Dexterity: 498
*****
Of course… just a few points shy.

The gods can’t always love you, can they? In the meantime, tell me, do you plan on fighting before or after you get this weapon you are helping to craft?
I think we need to wait. Every day there are fights, and since it appears beings come as word reaches them of who is fighting, why risk it. Seven more fights, and then we can move to the real power, if you’re correct.
That real power brings more opportunities to die. Do not forget the truth of that. If only you could enter the tower and see what lies inside.
Perhaps… though I’m not certain Igarra would allow that.
When the time came, Max repeated the process with the gem, finally getting the notification he had been hoping for.
[18 Dexterity Acquired]
[Dexterity Gem Absorbed]
[Stat Milestone 2 Reached]
[Dexterity of 500 acquired]
[Bonus speed and evasion granted - 50% speed increase]
[Bonus attack speed granted - 50% increase to all attack speeds]
[Rest required for final Milestone upgrade]

Finally…
Well done. You never cease to amaze me, Max, with how you manage to improve. It would appear we are in the best place to rest.
Closing his eyes, Max couldn’t help but smile, as Bob was right.
I’ll trust you to keep an eye out, then, while I sit here.
Trust me, I’ve never stopped watching over you, except for a few times when I couldn’t.
Letting his breathing slow down, Max fell asleep, his mind leaving this world and joining the one where his friends were.

43 Chapter 317

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1985999/chapter-317 2025-01-16;

Chapter 317
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Still, Max found himself breathing rapidly as the messages appeared.
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I do not know. This is not something I can recall, but I do know there are other evolutions beyond what you have encountered.
Groaning, Max stood up and left the room, feeling refreshed and energized.
How long was I asleep?
Only six hours. The chamber you were in floods your body with system energy. It has some potential questions that makes me wonder what might be possible if one could harness it.
What really makes me wonder is how Igarra has such a thing here.
Yet another thing to consider about her true power.
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The dwarf laughed as she pointed at her mother, who was now pounding on a pink metal bar that shined like a star.
"That woman hasn't slept in a decade. One of the skills we both own makes it where sleep isn't needed. Working here actually recharges us. You can't get this skill because you're not a dwarf. Regardless, this is my life. Now grab that apron, get your tools, and get over here. I want to see how this next part works."
Max moved quickly to the place his equipment was kept and donned the gear, breathing a little easier as the apron provided a bonus to resisting the heat of this room. It wasn't so bad he couldn't stand it, but the heat never stopped coming, and breathing after a while felt labored. The only way to really combat it was with this apron or activating Regeneration for a while.
The sounds of the hammer stopped as Max bent over the weapon head, seeing the lines he had started were still good and ready for him.
"Okay, the next part is going to require us using the power core and infusing it here within the socket. The problem comes with us wanting to not just use it by itself but also using an elemental core to bind with it. Those two will create something new and can often give a skill, as I mentioned, to the weapon."

“Balls and arses!” cried out the older dwarf that had moved to where Max and Buwingrid were working, gazing down over their shoulders.
He had tried to not react like the first time when the giant dwarf had appeared the first time, chewing out her daughter.
It had taken a moment to realize they were talking in a tongue the ring wouldn’t translate, and as such, he stood there as still as possible.
Buwingrid earned his trust when she repeated multiple times to her mother how they were trading knowledge and that getting to see what he was going to teach would help them in the long run.
“You realize that you can’t just force those two together!”
Turning his head, Max nodded and smiled up at the dwarf who was supposedly over a thousand years old.
An arc of lightning sparked between his fingers as he summoned the power of the spell.
“As I was going to say, having magical affinity allows me to do things most crafters can’t. I can use my own mana and spells to infuse the item. Just like you can use the tools from Quan Ma to infuse your health or mana into a weapon, this trick requires elemental magic.”
Both dwarves were frowning, and Max could see the two staring at each other.
“I told you, Mother, that I’ll need to find a skill shard that teaches elemental magic of some kind. Even if it’s not a high level one, I can at least attempt this process!”
“Foolish child! You give your skill and that child too much credit! Still, this is your place, waste whatever resources we have fought hard to acquire! Just know if this blows up and he dies, Igarra may not be happy with you! ”
Each of them glared at the other before Buwingrid turned and smiled at Max.
“She’s just concerned about how hard it will be to repeat this process when you’re not around.”
“Which is why I have given my word to return and help with two other weapons of your choosing to ensure that payment for what I’m getting is of equal value.”
“Bah! He’s getting far more than that! Without your ability, I’d never have agreed to this trade!”
With her last statement the older dwarf left the two of them and returned to her station, banging away with a little more force than before on whatever she was making.
“Anyways… old dwarves… sometimes they can be moody.”
“Does age really matter?” Max asked, earning a laugh from Buwingrid.
“No, I guess you’re right. Now then, let’s get your part of this over.”
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“That’s impressive,” Max stated as he studied the weapon head and the shaft. “How you were able to cause that liquid to change the metal. I’d love to learn where you acquired that skill.”
Grinning, Buwingrid shrugged.
“Every dwarf has their secrets. Not many come through who use this way of crafting. Usually it's from a race that lives in a world completely covered in water. When they visit here, they are in special suits that allow them to breathe. Those in and of themselves are very interesting to study. Now then, are you certain you wish to bind this to you? We could sell this and make a fortune. And that is before we know the final stats.”
Max nodded, knowing the truth of what she said, but he needed a weapon that could cut, pierce, or bash and far better than his staff.
“If you still trust me, I promise I will assist on the next two weapons you desire.”
Buwingrid nodded.
“I know. One doesn’t get to where I am without being able to read most people. Very well, bind it to you.”
Drawing the blade on his hip, Max sliced his palm, picked up the shaft, and ran his blood all up and down it. After that, he repeated the process for the weapon head.
“Okay, let me do my part.”

Buwingrid took the two pieces and moved to the section where she would join them, finishing the process in a little time.
Standing there, Max watched her work with a speed and ease of someone who had been crafting for over four hundred years.
Seems unfair she can learn the skill I just showed her by crafting that weapon. What skill is that?
A rare one… a very rare one. Something from one of the others. She is devouring the knowledge of what was done. Every move you made, all the things you taught, she absorbed the knowledge, but when that weapon is complete, it will be gained. The only thing she cannot do is the magical side.
Which is why she needs me still.
Correct. I have no doubts in the coming days she will find what she is looking for. The wealth they possess and the contacts they must have will allow them to acquire it easily. After that, unless you find something new, I doubt your presence will be allowed back here again.
Max saw that Buwingrid's mother was intently watching her daughter work. The only sound now in this heat-infused room was the younger dwarf, fashioning a weapon Max couldn't wait to hold.
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The dark wood had flecks of the silver liquid she had used in it, runes running up and down the piece. Everything about it was perfect, from the blackened weapon head to the yellow glowing orb set in the middle of the metal, above the shaft.
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"Is it?" Max asked, his mind occupied and not paying attention to how his voice had sounded.
A hand reached for him, and taking a step back, Max avoided the outstretched set of stubby fingers. Glancing at the dwarven woman before him, he saw her eyes were wide, both red eyebrows touching the top of her head.
"You have had it happen before?!"
Slowly nodding, the woman cursed as she spun around, waving both hands in the air.
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Buwingrid scowled for a moment before sighing and motioning to the room where supplies were kept.
“Come on… I’m going to work you till I feel you’ve paid off that weapon.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Tttt

PAT 43 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 317

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390661 2024-12-11;

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44 Chapter 318

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1987862/chapter-318 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://a.co/d/bX6K9EO]

Chapter 318

Two days later, Max emerged from the weapon shop, feeling tired but glad he had done his part.

Buwingrid had been a taskmaster, and the knowledge that he had given her three weapons instead of the two they had originally promised earned him gratitude from the dwarf.

Even the older one had forced a smile as he was led out of the forge.

I'm about ready to pass out… Even as much as I learned, promise me you'll talk me out of being stupid in the future like that.

That isn't a promise I can make because we both know you never stop doing stupid stuff.

Chuckling to himself, Max ignored the looks of those who saw and smelled him as he moved along the street. Blackened sections of skin, marred by the time in the forge, also stood out.

At least you kept the weapon as whip. Walking with that halberd would have been really weird for most.

It is true… very few carry anything over a dagger or swords. No large weapons like mine.

Soon Max found himself back at his place, almost tackled by a white ball of fur the moment the door opened.

"TWO DAYS! TWO DAYS! You didn't send me a note to tell me you were going to be gone?!"

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"I… uh… forgot? Sorry, Mom."

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"It's not funny… I'm here in this house, unable to leave because I don't know if something happened to you. For two days all I can think about is how I might be dead the moment I walk out that door. Or perhaps that won't matter and someone will come inside and kill me."

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"I'm sorry, Jazzjak. I didn't realize. Now tell me, what's really bothering you."

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Snorting, he glared at Max before finally growling for a few seconds.

"I'm nothing here… even now I realize that every day. I want to ask something, and I understand if you say no… but can I… can I get a skill shard from what you win?"

"Absolutely, and once again, I'm sorry. I keep forgetting what it must be like for you here. You were the top of the food chain in your circle, and now… all you do is cook and shop for me."

The vorpal rabbit held out its middle finger.

"Don't say it that way! Still… thank you. I know I can't stay here forever, and I'll need to try to return one day to my wife and children. When that happens, I'll have to be stronger. Especially if she found a new mate."

Blinking a few times, Max tried to not laugh at the vision of watching Jazzjak return home, only to find another male rabbit sitting in a chair, surrounded by a dozen tiny furballs.

"Ok, well, next victory, we'll work on getting you a skill shard that can help you. In the meantime, I need to clean up and sleep. I'm exhausted."

"And for being gone this long, all you brought home was a whip?"

Grinning, Max stood up and removed it from around his neck and chest.

He winked once, and the weapon shifted, returning to its original design, the halberd he had wanted from Buwingrid.

"A… weapon that transforms… how… how did you pay for this?"

“Through two days of blood, sweat, and more sweat. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to sleep. You can notify Quilazmore I’ll be ready for a fight tomorrow.”
Those red eyes seemed to glow when Max said that, and he nodded quickly.
“Want food first? I could make some while you clean up.”
A grumbling sound came from Max’s stomach, and both of them laughed.
“Food sounds good. Just make sure to cook my meat this time.”
Cackling, the rabbit hopped off toward the kitchen, while Max moved toward the stairs.
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Cheers came as Max dodged another shot from the two-headed ogre.
It was twelve feet tall, and its six arms currently kept him on the defensive.
Both bows it wielded required no arrows, and the constant barrage never ended.
One arrow had been all it had taken to know they hurt, though an anti-healing effect had been cleansed by Bob.
Weaving behind the metal pillars that stood every fifty yards, Max cursed inside.
She is fast… you’re faster, but you and I both know the six swords that decorate her hips and back also tell you it's going to be one hell of a fight.
And I love how this arena floor doesn’t have any stone, sand, or wood. I mean, I know they’re gunning for me, but come on…
Her green eyes were always watching as she shifted around the arena, moving between metal pillars, staying far enough away that charging her would be potential suicide if skills were used.
She’s shooting at least twice a second from a hundred and fifty yards. The one time I tried to get close she danced and evaded around the floor with ease. Tell me how a two-headed ogre can move that fast!
Because she can focus on two things at once… her two heads allow that. One controls the body, and the other the tactics. You’re trying to do everything.
Max sensed the arrows changing and dodged as two came around the pillar on the side he was hiding behind.
Racing across the floor, he was behind another pillar in a moment, a wall of air shattered as it stopped the two that had almost struck him from behind as he moved.
Can we do that? Can you and I work together where I move around, and you cast the spells? Is that even possible?
A barrage of arrows began to rain down around him, and the four-foot-wide metal column he was hiding behind.
[Demonic Portal]
Cursing under his breath, Max made it to another hiding spot, the game of cat and mouse having him unable to react.
My last fireball didn’t even get close, as she dodged it long before it would hit from this range.
Give me a moment. I’m doing something. Just focus on staying alive, and don’t cast anything unless you have to.
Shifting side to side, Max tried to get a read on which direction the arrows were coming from, letting his Sonar tell him which way he was going to have to move.
Two arrows almost clipped his left foot, and racing to the right, Max cursed as his Sonar informed him that another steady stream of pain was already on its way toward his new position. He swiped with his weapon and stopped one, while the other struck his leg, impaling it about an inch.
Heat radiated up it as the notification came.
[Anti-Heal Detected]
Ignoring both the burning sensation and the way his leg felt, Max raced toward the next column, wanting to summon a wall to help him make it there but didn’t, trusting Bob to do whatever he was attempting.
Every step had arrows leading him, and Max only avoided and blocked them thanks to his upgraded dexterity and milestone.

Grunting, he ripped the arrow out, watching as blood seeped from the wound, and he waited for the next attack to come.
“Yioreg continues to keep Ifrit pinned down! Can she bleed him out? Will he do nothing but run?!”
Holding a middle finger up to the air around him, Max waited.
Anything?
Soon. I think I can manage it, but the first few times may be difficult. You’ll have to trust me. If you try to take back any portion of the casting of skills or spells, it will block me from helping for a while.
Taking a deep breath, Max let it out.
I trust you, Bob. I’ll do what I can to get us close or in range. You handle the rest.
Fine. Then change your weapon. Make it a thicker sword. It will help you block the arrows while also confusing her. We need to make her hesitate for a moment.
Without waiting, Max focused his weapon into a long sword that had totally disproportionate dimension.
The blade was about four feet long but also about a foot wide. The metal wasn’t very thick, but all he could do was hope it would hold.
I’m ready when you are.
Good, now go! Race to a different one. Start the path. I’ll manage the rest.
Without waiting, Max raced off, his sword easily deflecting both arrows that came. There was a noticeable decrease in time between the following attacks as he reached another column.
Once more. I think I have what I need. I’m going to cast a spell, but it’s going to completely miss. Don’t worry about that.
Laughing, Max took off again, running between the metal protective barriers, reaching them in a moment, sensing the spell that Bob was casting.
A fireball… at this range… okay…
Trust me… now comes the tricky part. Chase her. I’ll call out the directions, and be ready. You’ll know when I expect you to get close. I’ll be using Haste and your Demonic Teleportation.
Just say when.
Wait three seconds, run away, and then four seconds. After that, charge from the left and work your way through the columns. I’ll guide you if I need you to change directions.
As instructed, Max moved when it was time, avoiding the renewed onslaught of arrows and blocking the ones he couldn’t dodge.
When the moment came to attack, he ran toward Yioreg and to the left, almost smiling as her barrage of arrows were not aimed in his new direction, having expected him to be fleeing still.
She adjusted quickly as she began backpedaling, working on keeping the distance. They were like bugs, hopping around the three-mile battleground, skittering left and right through the large spaces between the columns. She was as fast as he was, and staying ahead was easy.
Ignore the fireball.
Max wanted to laugh when it soared toward the right, causing Yioreg to move left and easily avoid the slow-moving spell.
Now! Get her!
[Haste]
He had considered this ability but hadn’t used it, knowing that it might be the only closer he had, and if it failed, he might never catch Yioreg.
Max’s mind barely was able to process the change in speed the moment it kicked in. One second he was almost two hundred yards away, the next he was in her face. Both sets of eyes looked shocked at his sudden appearance, and his sword worked like a shield, sending each arrow to the side as he deflected them.
As he drew close the spell he sensed went off.
[Ice Nova]

Yioreg had dropped both bows and begun reaching for all six swords, scowling at him with both sets of fangs.
The sound of metal on metal as they pulled free from their scabbards was nothing compared to the impact his sword made against hers.
Yioreg's speed ground to a halt as the spell touched her, slowing her down tremendously.
Still, Max had to move to the defensive, watching as six blades, all as long as his, moved in perfect harmony, swiping, parrying, and thrusting as he danced around the two-headed ogre.
A strike he thought would hit was parried by two, his blade scratching along the plate armor on her legs, not drawing blood, but the only thing that saved him was a wall of air followed up by a stone wall under the ogre's feet as she swung at him.
It launched her upward, and Max swung his weapon, surprised when it transformed into a spear, hoping to catch her feet, but the ogre leaped off, doing a backflip and falling to the ground on the other side.
His view shifted, now hidden by the stone wall as her body moved away from him, and both pairs of eyes lost sight of him. A smirk appeared as he realized what Bob was about to do.
In his hand was a weapon he had started his adventure with. It was like an old love, and holding it now brought back memories of Windsor Wheel.
Max thrust upward, wanting to roar with laughter as the notifications streamed by.
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
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Yioreg didn't know he was behind her as she came down from her flip, preparing to land on the metal floor.
A cry of pain came as his weapon thrust upward, four times in a moment, piercing her back and exploding through her chest.
Each strike hit with a power that very few could deal with.
The ogre wasn't a tank. She was a fast-moving killer.
But Max had just become something else.
He had become a hunter.

PAT 44 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 318

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390660 2024-12-12;

Two days later, Max emerged from the weapon shop, feeling tired but glad he had done his part.

Buwingrid had been a taskmaster, and the knowledge that he had given her three weapons instead of the two they had originally promised earned him gratitude from the dwarf.

Even the older one had forced a smile as he was led out of the forge.

I’m about ready to pass out… Even as much as I learned, promise me you’ll talk me out of being stupid in the future like that.

That isn’t a promise I can make because we both know you never stop doing stupid stuff.

Chuckling to himself, Max ignored the looks of those who saw and smelled him as he moved along the street. Blackened sections of skin, marred by the time in the forge, also stood out.

At least you kept the weapon as whip. Walking with that halberd would have been really weird for most.

It is true… very few carry anything over a dagger or swords. No large weapons like mine.

Soon Max found himself back at his place, almost tackled by a white ball of fur the moment the door opened.

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[Magical Strike]

[Rampage]

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45 Chapter 319

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1989534/chapter-319 2025-01-16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/101789/sword-saints-reincarnation-a-litrpg-adventure]

Chapter 319
Yioreg’s body fell to the metal floor, her swords clattering against the place she would never rise from.
A moment of silence had come after he had created four gaping holes in her back, sending a spray of blood, bones, and muscle out the front, even tearing through the plate armor on both sides.
It took the audience a second to realize the trap he had set. The trap Bob had set. Somehow it seemed so simple, and yet Max didn’t even consider it. Her greatest asset was speed and being able to track him. From a distance, he couldn’t move close without being bombarded, but when close and without those weapons, losing sight of him for a moment spelled doom.
He didn’t care, however. All that mattered was the cold rush he felt and the notifications waiting on him.
[Bonus Stats Consumed]
[35 Dexterity Consumed]
[35 Wisdom Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Archery - Epic has been upgraded to Archery - Legendary]
[Ranged Mastery - Epic has been upgraded to Ranged Mastery - Legendary]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Swordsmanship - Epic has been upgraded to Swordsmanship - Legendary]
[Melee Mastery - Epic has been upgraded to Melee Mastery - Legendary]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Arrow Volley]?]
[Yes / No]
Two legendary skills… from one person… How strong was she?
Strong enough she was going to destroy you if we played around with her. You handled that well, and I think we can practice what we did a little more. You read the change of the weapon, sensed what my plan was.
How did the weapon change faster than usual?
You didn’t notice that the moment you attacked your sword was changing, did you?

Looking back through his mind, Max saw that it had started changing, which was one of the reasons the strike hadn't done anything.
The blade shrank! That's why I missed her so badly!
From the first moment I saw her swinging those swords, I knew she was far more skilled than we were. Only one thing would win that fight, and it was a strike from behind. I wasn't certain what other skills she might have, but it appears not many. Her true talent lay in her ability to keep people at bay and then slice them to pieces if they got close.
The usual white tube of light surrounded Max, and he found himself back in his box, Jazzjak hopping up and down, his outfit looking a little wrinkled in some places.
"That was… closer than I expected. Great job using that wall and killing her from behind!"
Nodding at his companion, Max gave a shrug.
"I'd like to say it worked out exactly as I had planned, but the truth was, I got lucky. Someone picked that floor and opponent specifically for me."
"That is a dangerous thing to say out loud," Quilazmore said as he stood a few yards away. "To imply such a thing is to disgrace those who are responsible for these fights, and you should never forget who stands at the top of everything."
"I understand what you're saying," Max stated as he turned to face the tiny dark elf. "I'm simply pointing out the coincidences of such an opponent and a battlefield like that. The only thing that would have been completely out of place would have been an empty space with nothing but metal."
Purple teeth showed just a bit from under the dark lips, but Quilazmore said nothing, his eyes narrowed just a tad more than his usual *I'm an arse* gaze.
"But you're probably right. I'm a little tired, and it's one of those things where one's mind always thinks the worst possible ways. Now tell me, my next fight. How much harder is it going to be?"
Only his Sonar skill allowed Max to hear the grinding of the teeth from the servant tasked with assisting him.
"There will be a drastic increase in strength. You would be wise to take a few days and make sure you are recovered. Your movement skill was a wildcard, and all others will now know about it."
Shrugging, Max cracked his neck.
"Someone always finds a way to make things work against you. Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to return home. As always please have all my rewards brought to the house and given to Jazzjak. And if possible, I would prefer to see some actual good skills this time. I mean Molting? Come on… that thing was utter garbage."
A low growl wasn't hard to hear as Quilazmore glared at him.
"That skill stone was stronger than you realize. Did you bother to do any research about what it provides to an insect-based person?"
"I did not."
"Of course you didn't!" exclaimed the obviously pissed-off elf. "Had you, you would have known it granted them a chunk of physical improvements! Sure the process takes a while, and yes it hurts like hell as they grow a new body under their current skin, but improvements like that aren't easy to come by!"
Tsking his teeth, Max wanted to laugh, knowing it thankfully hadn't worked for him as the idea of growing a new body inside his old one and springing forth from his skin felt gross in so many ways.
"I apologize then. Perhaps I could get something that might be beneficial to my companion then. He could use a little help in assisting me, and sometimes I fear for his safety."
Both purple eyes rolled at Max's statement, but the elf nodded once as he understood the request without specifically asking for it.
"I shall see what I can do about acquiring a shard in the coming victories that will help with that *little* problem of yours," Quilazmore replied as he glanced at Jazzjak and emphasized the one word. "Is there anything else?"

“Nope! You’re the greatest!” Max replied with a smile and turned, leaving the dark elf physically shaking behind him.
***
“Must you goad him like that?”
“No, but let’s be honest, you and I both know that fight was designed to kill me. Tell me I’m wrong.”
Jazzjak glanced around the living room where they were sitting and then nodded his head.
“I couldn’t say that… perhaps you’re still upset about the fight and getting hit a few times. Regardless, you should rest and recover. Something tells me the less time you take between fights, the better your chances of more favorable moments.”
Max knew his companion was right, and so he stood up and moved toward the stairs.
“Ifrit… thank you.”
“For?”
Jazzjak coughed, and Max sensed him moving to where he was and so turned slightly, watching the vorpal bunny move closer to him.
“Giving me some dignity by how you asked. Making it seem like it’s for your own need and not mine. Even being willing to do that.”
Great effort was required to not reach down and scratch the small spot of fur between both ears, but Max overcame it, simply shrugging instead.
“That’s what friends do.”
With that Max turned and moved up the stairs, not slowing down as he heard the rabbit quietly say *friends* under its breath.
***
“CAN NOTHING STOP IFRIT FROM BLAZING UP THE RANKINGS?! NINE VICTORIES IN A ROW!”
Max let out a deep breath, pulling off the dangling pieces of metal armor that was slashed to bits on his arms and chest.
At his feet stood a puddle of burning black ooze.
That was a little harder than I had expected.
Chuckling, Max continued pulling off pieces as his body knit itself together.
You and I both know no one bet on us… or at least no one who doesn’t like an underdog. That thing wasn’t sentient, was it?
No… it was a mindless ball of death. How it was contained, or controlled, I have no idea.
Max grimaced as the portal appeared, and he found himself once more in his box. This time, however, there was only one presence, and he tried to not flinch as he recognized it.
“You never cease to amaze me.”
“I’m hope that is a good thing, Igarra. Did the fight at least entertain?”
She chuckled, and Max watched as her teeth showed, a smile or a smirk he was never certain, but the few times she graced him with her presence, it was often displayed.
“Oh, I would say you and I both made out well today. Many had not expected that outcome, but then again, I think you already knew that. I can see it from how you are moving with each fight. It’s different. Along this journey you have managed to become much stronger than any might have guessed.”
“Which makes me wonder why you are here.”
Do not provoke her. I can reset everything, but the cost would be one we don’t want to pay. I am close… I can feel it.
Her left eyelid twitched, and Max knew he had struck a nerve.
“Sorry… after a battle I sometimes get a little… obnoxious, amped up, not appreciative.”
She slowly nodded her head twice. Those golden eyes never left him for a moment.
“Your next fight isn’t like what you’ve faced so far. This rabble has been an appetizer. It wets the palate of many who think themselves worthy to face what lies next, and if

you ask around the city, very few survive more than a minute. Those who do still fall within the next. Tell me, do you still desire to venture into the tower?”
“I dooooo… but I’m curious. Why offer it now?”
Igarra began to move, walking toward one of the chairs, and sat down as graceful as Max had ever seen someone do. Her golden scales glistened, and her eyes seemed to shimmer.
“You may not believe me, but your rise has brought me much in the way of power and wealth. As I know you have already heard, many in our system and beyond are not lovers of your race. They often cheer for anyone who stands against you and bet the same way. Your path through this arena has seen vast quantities of power flood into my home, and as such, I feel I owe you a chance I don’t offer to most.”
“To enter the tower?”
She nodded.
“You can sit, you know. How you're standing now still looks like you’re poised for a fight, and trust me, Ifrit, I’m not here to fight.”
Max moved to the couch and sat down, doing his best to look less like he expected the room to be destroyed.
“So what would the tower involve?”
“I’ll take you there, give you some supplies, and let you go in. On this world, there are no parties. Everything you gain comes from you alone, and from what I have witnessed, you are able to accomplish just that.”
“Would I be allowed to defeat the tower?” Max asked, trying to read anything he could off the dragonkin across from him.
“Perhaps one day if you’re still here and haven’t found a way home. For now, you could enter the tower, grow stronger, and return. When you feel you are ready, leave it, come to me, and I’ll let you spar with one of my elite guards. Depending on how that goes, we can determine if you are ready.”
She’s lying…
It’s a trap… isn’t it?
Yes. However, I’m not certain you have a choice. Turn it down, and there is no telling what she might do or what you could face next in this arena.
“When would you suggest I head out?”
Igarra leaned forward, both elbows on her knees as she rested her head on her hands.
“Get a good night’s sleep. I’ll stop by tomorrow, and we’ll go from there. Anything else?”
Shaking his head, Max yawned, and stood up.
“I guess I’ll return home then and get ready. Thanks for helping me.”
She chuckled and shook her head.
“Thank you for all the wealth you’ve brought me.”
Stepping through the portal, Max found himself near his living room again, a ball of energy coming toward him as soon as he appeared.
“Ifrit! Are you alright?!”
“Maybe, Jazzjak, but we need to talk. Follow me.”
Each step hurt more than he wanted to admit as he walked up the stairs and moved into the special chamber. Dropping to the bench, Max sighed.
Any luck yet with that chemical?
No… it’s not poison, and it’s not a disease… it’s something else and every time I try to grab the thing within the system it slips out like a fish in water. You have the hit points, and your regeneration is still holding strong. Now that we are in this place, you’ll be fine, and we should be able to purge the effects soon.
Jazzjak stood outside the small room, waiting to hear what Max had to say, shifting from foot to foot on the stone floor.
“Tomorrow I’ll be leaving for the tower.”
His friend froze. Not even the pink nose on the vorpal bunny moved.

“Igarra told me I need to enter to tower to get stronger before I face the next opponent in the arena. Tomorrow, she will take me, and I am not certain what to expect.”
Those red eyes studied him, and the rabbit let out a string of curses.
“ *That lionkin humping bitch… she can suck— ”*
“Don’t call her that, just in case someone is listening,” Max stated, causing the rabbit’s eyes to go wider than ever before.
“You can understand me?”
“I can. Now listen. I need to tell you what I want you to do while I’m gone.”

PAT 45 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 319

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390659 2024-12-12;

Yioreg’s body fell to the metal floor, her swords clattering against the place she would never rise from.

A moment of silence had come after he had created four gaping holes in her back, sending a spray of blood, bones, and muscle out the front, even tearing through the plate armor on both sides.

It took the audience a second to realize the trap he had set. The trap Bob had set. Somehow it seemed so simple, and yet Max didn’t even consider it. Her greatest asset was speed and being able to track him. From a distance, he couldn’t move close without being bombarded, but when close and without those weapons, losing sight of him for a moment spelled doom.

He didn’t care, however. All that mattered was the cold rush he felt and the notifications waiting on him.

[Bonus Stats Consumed]

[35 Dexterity Consumed]

[35 Wisdom Consumed]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Archery - Epic has been upgraded to Archery - Legendary]

[Ranged Mastery - Epic has been upgraded to Ranged Mastery - Legendary]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]

[Swordsmanship - Epic has been upgraded to Swordsmanship - Legendary]

[Melee Mastery - Epic has been upgraded to Melee Mastery - Legendary]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Arrow Volley]?]

[Yes / No]

Two legendary skills… from one person… How strong was she?

Strong enough she was going to destroy you if we played around with her. You handled that well, and I think we can practice what we did a little more. You read the change of the weapon, sensed what my plan was.

How did the weapon change faster than usual?

You didn’t notice that the moment you attacked your sword was changing, did you?

Looking back through his mind, Max saw that it had started changing, which was one of the reasons the strike hadn’t done anything.

The blade shrank! That’s why I missed her so badly!

From the first moment I saw her swinging those swords, I knew she was far more skilled than we were. Only one thing would win that fight, and it was a strike from behind. I wasn’t certain what other skills she might have, but it appears not many. Her true talent lay in her ability to keep people at bay and then slice them to pieces if they got close.

The usual white tube of light surrounded Max, and he found himself back in his box, Jazzjak hopping up and down, his outfit looking a little wrinkled in some places.

“That was… closer than I expected. Great job using that wall and killing her from behind!”

Nodding at his companion, Max gave a shrug.

“I’d like to say it worked out exactly as I had planned, but the truth was, I got lucky. Someone picked that floor and opponent specifically for me.”

“That is a dangerous thing to say out loud,” Quilazmore said as he stood a few yards away. “To imply such a thing is to disgrace those who are responsible for these fights, and you should never forget who stands at the top of everything.”

“I understand what you’re saying,” Max stated as he turned to face the tiny dark elf. “I’m simply pointing out the coincidences of such an opponent and a battlefield like that. The only thing that would have been completely out of place would have been an empty space with nothing but metal.”

Purple teeth showed just a bit from under the dark lips, but Quilazmore said nothing, his eyes narrowed just a tad more than his usual *I’m an arse* gaze.

“But you’re probably right. I’m a little tired, and it’s one of those things where one's mind always thinks the worst possible ways. Now tell me, my next fight. How much harder is it going to be?”

Only his Sonar skill allowed Max to hear the grinding of the teeth from the servant tasked with assisting him.

“There will be a drastic increase in strength. You would be wise to take a few days and make sure you are recovered. Your movement skill was a wildcard, and all others will now know about it.”

Shrugging, Max cracked his neck.

“Someone always finds a way to make things work against you. Now, if you don’t mind, I’m going to return home. As always please have all my rewards brought to the house and given to Jazzjak. And

if possible, I would prefer to see some actual good skills this time. I mean Molting? Come on… that thing was utter garbage."

A low growl wasn't hard to hear as Quilazmore glared at him.

"That skill stone was stronger than you realize. Did you bother to do any research about what it provides to an insect-based person?"

"I did not."

"Of course you didn't!" exclaimed the obviously pissed-off elf. "Had you, you would have known it granted them a chunk of physical improvements! Sure the process takes a while, and yes it hurts like hell as they grow a new body under their current skin, but improvements like that aren't easy to come by!"

Tsking his teeth, Max wanted to laugh, knowing it thankfully hadn't worked for him as the idea of growing a new body inside his old one and springing forth from his skin felt gross in so many ways.

"I apologize then. Perhaps I could get something that might be beneficial to my companion then. He could use a little help in assisting me, and sometimes I fear for his safety."

Both purple eyes rolled at Max's statement, but the elf nodded once as he understood the request without specifically asking for it.

"I shall see what I can do about acquiring a shard in the coming victories that will help with that *little* problem of yours," Quilazmore replied as he glanced at Jazzjak and emphasized the one word. "Is there anything else?"

"Nope! You're the greatest!" Max replied with a smile and turned, leaving the dark elf physically shaking behind him.

***

"Must you goad him like that?"

"No, but let's be honest, you and I both know that fight was designed to kill me. Tell me I'm wrong."

Jazzjak glanced around the living room where they were sitting and then nodded his head.

“I couldn’t say that… perhaps you’re still upset about the fight and getting hit a few times. Regardless, you should rest and recover. Something tells me the less time you take between fights, the better your chances of more favorable moments.”

Max knew his companion was right, and so he stood up and moved toward the stairs.

“Ifrit… thank you.”

“For?”

Jazzjak coughed, and Max sensed him moving to where he was and so turned slightly, watching the vorpal bunny move closer to him.

“Giving me some dignity by how you asked. Making it seem like it’s for your own need and not mine. Even being willing to do that.”

Great effort was required to not reach down and scratch the small spot of fur between both ears, but Max overcame it, simply shrugging instead.

“That’s what friends do.”

With that Max turned and moved up the stairs, not slowing down as he heard the rabbit quietly say *friends* under its breath.

***

“CAN NOTHING STOP IFRIT FROM BLAZING UP THE RANKINGS?! NINE VICTORIES IN A ROW!”

Max let out a deep breath, pulling off the dangling pieces of metal armor that was slashed to bits on his arms and chest.

At his feet stood a puddle of burning black ooze.

That was a little harder than I had expected.

Chuckling, Max continued pulling off pieces as his body knit itself together.

You and I both know no one bet on us… or at least no one who doesn’t like an underdog. That thing wasn’t sentient, was it?

No… it was a mindless ball of death. How it was contained, or controlled, I have no idea.

Max grimaced as the portal appeared, and he found himself once more in his box.

This time, however, there was only one presence, and he tried to not flinch as he recognized it.

“You never cease to amaze me.”

“I’m hope that is a good thing, Igarra. Did the fight at least entertain?”

She chuckled, and Max watched as her teeth showed, a smile or a smirk he was never certain, but the few times she graced him with her presence, it was often displayed.

“Oh, I would say you and I both made out well today. Many had not expected that outcome, but then again, I think you already knew that. I can see it from how you are moving with each fight. It’s different. Along this journey you have managed to become much stronger than any might have guessed.”

“Which makes me wonder why you are here.”

Do not provoke her. I can reset everything, but the cost would be one we don’t want to pay. I am close… I can feel it.

Her left eyelid twitched, and Max knew he had struck a nerve.

“Sorry… after a battle I sometimes get a little… obnoxious, amped up, not appreciative.”

She slowly nodded her head twice. Those golden eyes never left him for a moment.

“Your next fight isn’t like what you’ve faced so far. This rabble has been an appetizer. It wets the palate of many who think themselves worthy to face what lies next, and if you ask around the city, very few survive more than a minute. Those who do still fall within the next. Tell me, do you still desire to venture into the tower?”

“I dooooo… but I’m curious. Why offer it now?”

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“You can sit, you know. How you're standing now still looks like you’re poised for a fight, and trust me, Ifrit, I’m not here to fight.”

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“So what would the tower involve?”

“I’ll take you there, give you some supplies, and let you go in. On this world, there are no parties. Everything you gain comes from you alone, and from what I have witnessed, you are able to accomplish just that.”

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She’s lying…

It’s a trap… isn’t it?

Yes. However, I’m not certain you have a choice. Turn it down, and there is no telling what she might do or what you could face next in this arena.

“When would you suggest I head out?”

Igarra leaned forward, both elbows on her knees as she rested her head on her hands.

“Get a good night’s sleep. I’ll stop by tomorrow, and we’ll go from there. Anything else?”

Shaking his head, Max yawned, and stood up.

“I guess I’ll return home then and get ready. Thanks for helping me.”

She chuckled and shook her head.

“Thank you for all the wealth you’ve brought me.”

Stepping through the portal, Max found himself near his living room again, a ball of energy coming toward him as soon as he appeared.

“Ifrit! Are you alright?!”

“Maybe, Jazzjak, but we need to talk. Follow me.”

Each step hurt more than he wanted to admit as he walked up the stairs and moved into the special chamber. Dropping to the bench, Max sighed.

Any luck yet with that chemical?

No… it’s not poison, and it’s not a disease… it’s something else and every time I try to grab the thing within the system it slips out like a fish in water. You have the hit points, and your regeneration is still holding strong. Now that we are in this place, you’ll be fine, and we should be able to purge the effects soon.

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“Tomorrow I’ll be leaving for the tower.”

His friend froze. Not even the pink nose on the vorpal bunny moved.

“Igarra told me I need to enter to tower to get stronger before I face the next opponent in the arena. Tomorrow, she will take me, and I am not certain what to expect.”

Those red eyes studied him, and the rabbit let out a string of curses.

“*That lionkin humping bitch… she can suck—*”

“Don’t call her that, just in case someone is listening,” Max stated, causing the rabbit’s eyes to go wider than ever before.

“You can understand me?”

“I can. Now listen. I need to tell you what I want you to do while I’m gone.”

46 Chapter 320

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1994765/chapter-320 2025-01-16;

Chapter 320
[Substance KXY-420 Removed]
[Stats Debuff Cleansed]
Finally… that took far longer than I had hoped.
Max breathed easier as the twenty percent debuff vanished.
[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 421/1000
Tower Experience: 40.00%
HP: 24940/24940
MP: 10020/10020
Stamina: 6235/6235
STR: 642+653
DEX: 617+630
CON: 698+703
INT: 488+514
WIS: 495+521
Defense of the Dragon - 20%
Defense of the Demon - 20%
Demon Essence: - 176
Skills:
Baking - Common
Consume - Epic
Shield - Epic
Berserker - Epic

Stealth - Epic
Dual Wield - Epic
Sonar - Epic
Melee Weapon Mastery - Legendary
Power Strike - Epic
Backstab - Epic
Evasion - Epic
Haste - Uncommon
Festering Touch - Common
Death Magic - Rare
Conceal Self - Epic
Regeneration - Epic
Elemental Mastery - Legendary
Armored Warrior - Epic
Intimidation - Epic
Bulwark - Epic
Dark Magic - Rare
Ranged Mastery - Legendary
Poison Making - Uncommon
Trap Detection - Uncommon
Rampage - Epic
Weakness - Rare
Demonic Magic - Rare
Demonic Summoning - Rare
Demonic Teleportation - Rare
Weapon Crafting - Legendary
Armor Crafting - Epic
Magical Strike - Rare
Formidable Mind - Epic
Ice Resistance - Rare
Poison Immunity - Legendary
Empowered Ranged Attack - Epic
Engineering & Tinkering Mastery - Epic
Power Core Crafting - Epic
Negate Death Blow - Legendary
Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation - Epic
Protect Ally - Rare
Fire Familar - Epic
Quick Attack - Epic
Acid Resistance - Epic
Sand Mastery - Epic
Stone Mastery - Epic
Ghost Strike - Rare
Wood Mastery - Rare
Harden Body - Epic
Ultimate Form - Rare
Omnilingualism- Legendary
Spell Burst - Rare
Arrow Volley - Epic
Blink - Epic
Mirrored Image - Epic
Phasing - Epic
Equipment:
Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase
Merfolk King’s Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement
Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase
Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase

*****

Perhaps I should have held my weapon for this. Still, those last few fights provided stats and abilities we both know will pay dividends down the road.

Yes… Not using them during the last few fights was a smart choice. I think Igarra was beginning to wonder how you were continually doing so many different things. There are other skills that mimic some, but they only last so long or have limited slots.

[Skill Description - Blink]

*****

Blink - Epic Skill: The user is able to relocate themselves with a thought up to twenty-five yards away. This action is instant. Cooldown is four hours.

*****

[Skill Description - Mirrored Image]

*****

Mirrored Image - Epic Skill: The user creates an exact duplicate of their current body, wearing a modified version of all equipment and weapons. This clone will act independently after receiving a mental command from the user. No skills will be transferred. Half of current stats and hit points are possessed by the image. Cooldown is twenty-four hours.

*****

[Skill Description - Phasing]

*****

Phasing - Epic Skill: The user's body becomes intangible. During this time all physical, magical and energy attacks will miss the target. Psionic and mental attacks can still affect the user. The user may also move through physical objects or enemies. If they are inside a physical object when the ability ends, both targets will sustain damage based on the power level of each object. It is not recommended for the user to attempt passing through objects such as stone and metal, as they may find themselves weaker and end up dead. Against organic objects, constitution and other toughness perks will determine whether the user or object is destroyed. Lasts five seconds. Cooldown is twelve hours.

*****

Yeah… that phasing one was tempting for sure against the last fight. However, I'm not sure who would have won the battle of body types.

It is almost time for us to leave. Whatever happens next, know that I will be prepared for anything, and if we must fight, go all out. I will burn through every ounce of power I have gained to defeat her.

Sighing, Max rose from the stone bench and grabbed his weapon, sliding the whip onto his shoulders—he had taken to shaping it that way for easy carrying.

There is nothing like feeling you're walking into a situation far beyond your control and there isn't a thing you can do about it.

***

"I must warn you, this isn't going to be an easy process," Igarra stated as she handed the purple leather pack to Max. "Every tower across all the worlds is different. I have no doubt you will one day learn that after you return."

Max nodded, his Sonar skill on full tilt, trying to read the woman, but her scaled body gave off nothing.

She knows you know there is no way out of this. For her this is a victory lap.

"How long will this take? To complete?"

"I expect you should be done within a week. I have food and water in the pack for about nine days, but based on what I have seen you accomplish, you might finish sooner than that. Just know there is a boss at the end of this floor. When you defeat it, you're strong enough to return and face the next opponent in the arena."

He was about to ask another question, but Igarra turned and moved to a pedestal that stood outside the tower.

Max had already tried to take in the sight of it as it rose into the sky and vanished. The way it was built reminded him of the one back on his world.
Different floors had a variety of stone, sand, glass, and other colored structures. No water ran outside this one, as far as he could see, but there were vines on a few floors. Unlike his, the size of each floor looked larger, spanning hundreds of yards each.
“It’s ready,” Igarra said, as Max felt the portal start to shimmer with his skill.
A moment ago, nothing had been where the portal usually was between the arches, and now a purple one vibrated with power.
“Thanks again. Hopefully, I can return soon, and you’ll gain just as much power as I find a way to keep fighting and return home.”
Her grin grew, and she nodded, motioning with a gold-scaled hand.
“I look forward to that.”
A memory came to his mind as Max moved toward the portal. He recalled it now, though he had been only nine. One person in his hometown had been found guilty of murder and was led through the city, walking on his own toward the executioner who would remove his head. Now that memory came, and Max remembered how the man had moved.
He hadn’t shuffled or cried, glared at people, or shouted back at them as they yelled at him.
Instead, he had his head held high and walked as if he was going to the market to purchase something.
Today, Max walked the same way. Each step he took was as if this was nothing more than a dungeon run like he had done hundreds of time. Inside would be Aimee…
I wonder what happened to that baker…
Focus.
He had reached the portal, and he reached out and touched it with his hand.
Expecting a display and a selection screen to appear, Max was surprised when instead he felt his vision go blank and his Sonar reveal he was no longer outside the tower.
Now he was inside it.
Nothing showed up in his skills range, and when his eyes returned, Max saw that he was in a long tunnel, seventy yards wide, and it ran for as far as his eyes could see.
There was light, the ceiling above giving off a faint yellow glow, just enough like a morning sunrise, and the only thing else he could see was the worked purple stone that surrounded him on all sides.
What is this place?
“Max. Forgive me if this is the last time we talk.”
A floating head appeared of Igarra about thirty yards away, easily twenty feet tall, her glowing golden eyes fixed on him.
“I spoke with Ezreal, and he wouldn’t talk about you much, but he told me if I could remove you, he would make it worth my while. So consider this my trade. You’ll die as every tower climber should. Inside the tower.”
Max’s head felt like it was going to explode, and he wanted to yell, but Bob held him back.
Don’t. Let her speak.
There was a thread of concern that even his skill couldn’t hide.
“I was tempted to face you, to fight you myself, but to do so would lower me in so many ways, and I would rather not risk any more of my soldiers. I should have listened to that lizard-woman companion of yours, but I thought she was simply foolish. Now I see she was correct.”
“Aimee? What about her?!” Max exclaimed, taking a few steps toward the floating image.
Laughter came from Igarra, and it reflected off the walls, almost causing Max’s head to hurt.

“Oh, that one is a snake… well perhaps not a snake, as she would find that offensive, but she played you so well. Her plan to motivate you to give her more than you promised was surprisingly effective.”
Max felt his eyes go wide, and his heart began to pound within his chest.
“What… what did she…”
He didn’t need the master of this tower to tell him what his mind already started to figure out.
“No… she couldn’t have… that’s not—”
“Possible? Oh yes,” Igarra replied, her teeth all showing as she snickered. “She approached me, as dangerous as it was, sent a message, and since you intrigued me, I listened. Your companion had that weapon crafter slaughtered and made certain none would find out who ordered it. She might have had an Acting skill, the way she played you, begging you for more power so she could be safe. Don’t worry. I rewarded her well. Your transformation to a killing machine served us both. Now she is carving her own path, making a name for herself in blood. She wanted me to tell you the day before I promised to kill you what she had done.”
Pain in Max’s chest threatened to bring him to his knees.
Don’t! Don’t give in to her and this!
“She… she killed him… for what?! Power? Strength?! Doesn’t what I did mean anything?”
“Oh you are naive… just like she said,” Igarra replied with a snort. “Max… you’re a fool. Everyone in this world kills to get ahead. No one gets stronger by being nice. Eventually that weapon smith would have—”
“NO!” Max roared, glaring at the image before him. “You’re wrong! I’m going to escape here and kill you! I’m going to end your life, and as I watch the spark of everything inside vanish, I will remind you of what you said!”
Even as he stood there, shaking with fury, his face feeling warm and a throbbing sensation in his neck, Max was more enraged at the way Igarra shook her head.
“Max… Max Hoste I believe it was. Believe what you will. Just know that no one has ever escaped the tower. When you die under the endless horde of creatures that are already on their way to assault you, know that you failed. Know you were just another weak creature who hoped they could stand beside me.”
She paused, her floating head moving closer to him, and both eyes filled the space he saw.
“You are simply a bug, and I have chosen this method to squash you.”
A cry came from down the hallway, and it turned from a small noise to a growing one.
The sound of feet, hooves, or other objects pounding stone and coming down it began to rise like waves on a sea during a storm.
You can see them. Can’t you?
Max couldn’t help but see what was approaching. A thick line of enemies was coming toward him. So many different sizes and shapes, all with purple eyes that were fixated upon where he was standing.
“Now then, while I’m sure you’re going to last for a while, I’m required elsewhere. In that pack you will find food and water for about nine days. Know that while I hope you last that long before your mind and body breaks, eventually the horde will break you.”
Her full face appeared once more as she leaned back from whatever object she was using to send her image.
“Still, even if you manage to somehow to defeat those things, just know this. At the end of all is a creature who sees what you are about to face as nothing more than a fly and will swat you just the same.”
The image faded, and one last taunt came as it did.
“Good luck, you foolish human. Die well.”

PAT 46 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 320

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390789 2024-12-12(2024-12-13 14:14 23h ago);

[Substance KXY-420 Removed]

[Stats Debuff Cleansed]

Finally… that took far longer than I had hoped.

Max breathed easier as the twenty percent debuff vanished.

[Status Check]

*****

Max Hoste

18-Year-old Human Male

Level 1

Exp 421/1000

Tower Experience: 40.00%

HP: 24940/24940

MP: 10020/10020

Stamina: 6235/6235

STR: 642+653

DEX: 617+630

CON: 698+703

INT: 488+514

WIS: 495+521

Defense of the Dragon - 20%

Defense of the Demon - 20%

Demon Essence: - 176

Skills:

Baking - Common

Consume - Epic

Shield - Epic

Berserker - Epic

Stealth - Epic

Dual Wield - Epic

Sonar - Epic

Melee Weapon Mastery - Legendary

Power Strike - Epic

Backstab - Epic

Evasion - Epic

Haste - Uncommon

Festering Touch - Common

Death Magic - Rare

Conceal Self - Epic

Regeneration - Epic

Elemental Mastery - Legendary

Armored Warrior - Epic

Intimidation - Epic

Bulwark - Epic

Dark Magic - Rare

Ranged Mastery - Legendary

Poison Making - Uncommon

Trap Detection - Uncommon

Rampage - Epic

Weakness - Rare

Demonic Magic - Rare

Demonic Summoning - Rare

Demonic Teleportation - Rare

Weapon Crafting - Legendary

Armor Crafting - Epic

Magical Strike - Rare

Formidable Mind - Epic

Ice Resistance - Rare

Poison Immunity - Legendary

Empowered Ranged Attack - Epic

Engineering & Tinkering Mastery - Epic

Power Core Crafting - Epic

Negate Death Blow - Legendary

Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation - Epic

Protect Ally - Rare

Fire Familar - Epic

Quick Attack - Epic

Acid Resistance - Epic

Sand Mastery - Epic

Stone Mastery - Epic

Ghost Strike - Rare

Wood Mastery - Rare

Harden Body - Epic

Ultimate Form - Rare

Omnilingualism- Legendary

Spell Burst - Rare

Arrow Volley - Epic

Blink - Epic

Mirrored Image - Epic

Phasing - Epic

Equipment:

Gold Walkers- 20% Stat Increase

Merfolk King’s Gift - 75 STR/DEX/CON/INT/WIS - Merfolk Water Attunement

Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase

Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase

*****

Perhaps I should have held my weapon for this. Still, those last few fights provided stats and abilities we both know will pay dividends down the road.

Yes… Not using them during the last few fights was a smart choice. I think Igarra was beginning to wonder how you were continually doing so many different things. There are other skills that mimic some, but they only last so long or have limited slots.

[Skill Description - Blink]

*****

Blink - Epic Skill: The user is able to relocate themselves with a thought up to twenty-five yards away. This action is instant. Cooldown is four hours.

*****

[Skill Description - Mirrored Image]

*****

Mirrored Image - Epic Skill: The user creates an exact duplicate of their current body, wearing a modified version of all equipment and weapons. This clone will act independently after receiving a mental command from the user. No skills will be transferred. Half of current stats and hit points are possessed by the image. Cooldown is twenty-four hours.

*****

[Skill Description - Phasing]

*****

Phasing - Epic Skill: The user’s body becomes intangible. During this time all physical, magical and energy attacks will miss the target. Psionic and mental attacks can still affect the user. The user may also move through physical objects or enemies. If they are inside a physical object when the ability ends, both targets will sustain damage based on the power level of each object. It is not recommended for the user to attempt passing through objects such as stone and metal, as they may find themselves weaker and end up dead. Against organic objects, constitution and other toughness

perks will determine whether the user or object is destroyed. Lasts five seconds. Cooldown is twelve hours.

*****

Yeah… that phasing one was tempting for sure against the last fight. However, I'm not sure who would have won the battle of body types.

It is almost time for us to leave. Whatever happens next, know that I will be prepared for anything, and if we must fight, go all out. I will burn through every ounce of power I have gained to defeat her.

Sighing, Max rose from the stone bench and grabbed his weapon, sliding the whip onto his shoulders—he had taken to shaping it that way for easy carrying.

There is nothing like feeling you're walking into a situation far beyond your control and there isn't a thing you can do about it.

***

"I must warn you, this isn't going to be an easy process," Igarra stated as she handed the purple leather pack to Max. "Every tower across all the worlds is different. I have no doubt you will one day learn that after you return."

Max nodded, his Sonar skill on full tilt, trying to read the woman, but her scaled body gave off nothing.

She knows you know there is no way out of this. For her this is a victory lap.

"How long will this take? To complete?"

"I expect you should be done within a week. I have food and water in the pack for about nine days, but based on what I have seen you accomplish, you might finish sooner than that. Just know there is a boss at the end of this floor. When you defeat it, you're strong enough to return and face the next opponent in the arena."

He was about to ask another question, but Igarra turned and moved to a pedestal that stood outside the tower.

Max had already tried to take in the sight of it as it rose into the sky and vanished. The way it was built reminded him of the one back on his world.

Different floors had a variety of stone, sand, glass, and other colored structures. No water ran outside this one, as far as he could see, but there were vines on a few floors. Unlike his, the size of each floor looked larger, spanning hundreds of yards each.

“It’s ready,” Igarra said, as Max felt the portal start to shimmer with his skill.

A moment ago, nothing had been where the portal usually was between the arches, and now a purple one vibrated with power.

“Thanks again. Hopefully, I can return soon, and you’ll gain just as much power as I find a way to keep fighting and return home.”

Her grin grew, and she nodded, motioning with a gold-scaled hand.

“I look forward to that.”

A memory came to his mind as Max moved toward the portal. He recalled it now, though he had been only nine. One person in his hometown had been found guilty of murder and was led through the city, walking on his own toward the executioner who would remove his head. Now that memory came, and Max remembered how the man had moved.

He hadn’t shuffled or cried, glared at people, or shouted back at them as they yelled at him.

Instead, he had his head held high and walked as if he was going to the market to purchase something.

Today, Max walked the same way. Each step he took was as if this was nothing more than a dungeon run like he had done hundreds of time. Inside would be Aimee…

I wonder what happened to that baker…

Focus.

He had reached the portal, and he reached out and touched it with his hand.

Expecting a display and a selection screen to appear, Max was surprised when instead he felt his vision go blank and his Sonar reveal he was no longer outside the tower.

Now he was inside it.

Nothing showed up in his skills range, and when his eyes returned, Max saw that he was in a long tunnel, seventy yards wide, and it ran for as far as his eyes could see.

There was light, the ceiling above giving off a faint yellow glow, just enough like a morning sunrise, and the only thing else he could see was the worked purple stone that surrounded him on all sides.

What is this place?

“Max. Forgive me if this is the last time we talk.”

A floating head appeared of Igarra about thirty yards away, easily twenty feet tall, her glowing golden eyes fixed on him.

“I spoke with Ezreal, and he wouldn’t talk about you much, but he told me if I could remove you, he would make it worth my while. So consider this my trade. You’ll die as every tower climber should. Inside the tower.”

Max’s head felt like it was going to explode, and he wanted to yell, but Bob held him back.

Don’t. Let her speak.

There was a thread of concern that even his skill couldn’t hide.

“I was tempted to face you, to fight you myself, but to do so would lower me in so many ways, and I would rather not risk any more of my soldiers. I should have listened to that lizard-woman companion of yours, but I thought she was simply foolish. Now I see she was correct.”

“Aimee? What about her?!” Max exclaimed, taking a few steps toward the floating image.

Laughter came from Igarra, and it reflected off the walls, almost causing Max’s head to hurt.

“Oh, that one is a snake… well perhaps not a snake, as she would find that offensive, but she played you so well. Her plan to motivate you to give her more than you promised was surprisingly effective.”

Max felt his eyes go wide, and his heart began to pound within his chest.

“What… what did she…”

He didn’t need the master of this tower to tell him what his mind already started to figure out.

“No… she couldn’t have… that’s not—”

“Possible? Oh yes,” Igarra replied, her teeth all showing as she snickered. “She approached me, as dangerous as it was, sent a message, and since you intrigued me, I listened. Your companion had that weapon crafter slaughtered and made certain none would find out who ordered it. She might have had an Acting skill, the way she played you, begging you for more power so she could be safe. Don’t worry. I rewarded her well. Your transformation to a killing machine served us both. Now she is carving her own path, making a name for herself in blood. She wanted me to tell you the day before I promised to kill you what she had done.”

Pain in Max’s chest threatened to bring him to his knees.

Don’t! Don’t give in to her and this!

“She… she killed him… for what?! Power? Strength?! Doesn’t what I did mean anything?”

“Oh you are naive… just like she said,” Igarra replied with a snort. “Max… you’re a fool. Everyone in this world kills to get ahead. No one gets stronger by being nice. Eventually that weapon smith would have—”

“NO!” Max roared, glaring at the image before him. “You’re wrong! I’m going to escape here and kill you! I’m going to end your life, and as I watch the spark of everything inside vanish, I will remind you of what you said!”

Even as he stood there, shaking with fury, his face feeling warm and a throbbing sensation in his neck, Max was more enraged at the way Igarra shook her head.

“Max… Max Hoste I believe it was. Believe what you will. Just know that no one has ever escaped the tower. When you die under the endless horde of creatures that are already on their way to assault you, know that you failed. Know you were just another weak creature who hoped they could stand beside me.”

She paused, her floating head moving closer to him, and both eyes filled the space he saw.

“You are simply a bug, and I have chosen this method to squash you.”

A cry came from down the hallway, and it turned from a small noise to a growing one.

The sound of feet, hooves, or other objects pounding stone and coming down it began to rise like waves on a sea during a storm.

You can see them. Can’t you?

Max couldn’t help but see what was approaching. A thick line of enemies was coming toward him. So many different sizes and shapes, all with purple eyes that were fixated upon where he was standing.

“Now then, while I’m sure you’re going to last for a while, I’m required elsewhere. In that pack you will find food and water for about nine days. Know that while I hope you last that long before your mind and body breaks, eventually the horde will break you.”

Her full face appeared once more as she leaned back from whatever object she was using to send her image.

“Still, even if you manage to somehow to defeat those things, just know this. At the end of all is a creature who sees what you are about to face as nothing more than a fly and will swat you just the same.”

The image faded, and one last taunt came as it did.

“Good luck, you foolish human. Die well.”

47 Chapter 320a

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1994846/chapter-320a 2025-01-16;

Chapter 320a

“Tanila?! What’s wrong?!”

Tanila was sobbing, and Batrire held her friend close. The friend she knew was struggling still after all this time, unable to speak after waking everyone up from the screams that had come from her mouth.

Fowl stood there, trying to advert his eyes from the spilled and mangled red hair as Cordellia knelt by the bed, stroking the hand of the one who was royalty.

“Speak to us, princess. Tell us what is wrong.”

Large sobs came, and each breath made Tanila’s whole body shudder. Finally, after a few minutes, she wiped her arm across her nose, not caring about the snot that had run freely and made her look like a beggar on the street.

“Max… I… I felt something… through this…”

She tapped the necklace on her chest, and Batrire’s eyes blinked a few times as she stared at it.

“The one that tells you he is still alive?”

Sniffing while bobbing her head, their mage tried to fix her hair some, pulling the strands everywhere out from in front of her face.

“Yes… as long as it doesn’t break… he’s alive. I… I have been able to keep going because I know he is alive. Each day we fight, and try to grow stronger and defeat the next floor in the tower, I know that he is alive. I can sense it. I can feel it.

“It’s the only thing that gets me out of bed each day. Knowing one day he will return and that I need to be strong enough to be beside him.”

Cordellia scoffed and then grimaced when those irritated green eyes glowered at her.

“I mean, Tanila, you’re stronger than all of us. How can you say that?”

“You don’t know Max. He is far stronger. I can feel it every day somehow. Yet… in my sleep just now…”

She shuddered for a few seconds, squeezing herself tight.

“Something has happened, and it is like a pain I have never felt before. I’m afraid for him—for who he is.”

“As in that he is hurt?” Fowl asked from across the room, taking a few steps toward the trio of women at the bed.

“No,” Tanila replied, forcing a smile as she stared at the dwarf she knew was hurting almost as much as she was. “Not like that… more like his soul was broken.”

“The skill?”

No one said anything for a few seconds after Fowl whispered those words.

“No… it was something else.”

“But he is alive,” Batrire stated. “Surely that means something. Right?”

Another few sniffs came, and Tanila nodded.

“But what if the Max I know and love is gone? What if whatever lives within isn’t the man…”

Tears began to flow, faster this time, and both women grabbed her tighter.

“If he isn’t what man?” Fowl demanded, now at the foot of the bed, squeezing the wood at the end.

“I’m pregnant,” Tanila whispered.

The only sound that came next was their dwarven warrior who had lost his grip and fallen to the stone floor.

Max… don’t give up. Your child and I need you.

Squeezing the necklace with her hand, Tanila willed her desire harder than ever before.

PAT 47 Ultimate Level 1 - Book 6 - Chapter 320a

https://www.patreon.com/posts/ultimate-level-1-114390786 2024-12-12(2024-12-13 14:17 22h ago);

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48 Chapter 321

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1996919/chapter-321 2025-01-08;

Chapter 321
Red… so much red…
Let me take everything over again. I can handle these long moments.
No! I need to push through! I need…
Max didn’t have to even think about what he was doing anymore. All he needed to do was swing his weapon, and something died.
Four days had passed, and not for a moment had his berserker rage ended.
Everything was running full-tilt, and Bob had mastered the art of casting all the abilities and spells. Mana and health were not an issue as the two of them worked together to cut down a never-ending line of monsters.
These are tougher, but still not a single stat has been gained… what is this place? The tide hasn’t changed at all.
It is a never-ending horde. There are only two options. Fight your way to the end, and defeat whatever lies beyond or die. Eventually, you will fall.
But will the monsters ever get so strong we cannot defeat them?
That is something I’m still not able to answer. Do you not remember you asked this two days ago?

Max's mind hurt as he tried to remember if he had. His weapon slashed and thrusted, moving so fast the monsters and creatures he killed never knew they were dead until cut in half or missing a head.
What if I summon that demon? Would that give us any break?
You are getting low on demon essence. Without that, eventually you'll find yourself unable to use those abilities at all. Would a break be worth it?
I could drink and eat. We can talk. It would buy us two hours, and you must have gained enough power that resetting the skill wouldn't be an issue, correct?
It would not… I see the logic in that decision and think you may be in need of sustenance. No matter how much health and mana you recover, there is a point where food is beneficial.
Hundreds of monsters fell all around him as another bolt of lightning came from his hand while two different storms raged before and behind him, each one killing with impunity.
Pressed upon from every side, Max simply pushed forward, slaughtering everything that came in reach with his weapon, while Bob sent spell after spell that reaped countless lives as flames washed from around him, incinerating everything in their path.
Perhaps he can answer some questions when he comes. That may give us answers to what may help us escape this place.
Bob didn't reply, but Max felt the acknowledgment at his thought.
It took just a fraction of a second, his dagger yanked free, a small cut on his arm, the only place he bled while blood was everywhere else.
Had one followed the scene from afar, the number of bodies that stretched for over twenty miles would have made most kings turn back in fear from what was carving a path of destruction.
[Demonic Summoning]
Blood flowed from his arm like a river, and the same runes formed again, this time thicker and brighter, igniting as always.
The rainbowed crystal wall formed, and a red section of portal was barely visible. As all the times before claws began to appear, except this time they were much smaller than before. Max watched as the portal opened up, catching a glimpse of other demons and creatures who stood away from the portal: red, black, yellow and other colored eyes staring at him through it.
Stepping through was a humanoid figure, eight feet tall, covered in black skin that moved like flesh, a smaller set of red horns that radiated with an aura on its head. Two red eyes were fixed upon him, and a smile was set upon the demon's face. Yellow teeth that looked sharper than daggers made a perfect smile, one that would look normal if not for tips that looked ready to rip away flesh.
Every bit of its body was covered in hard muscle, veins exposed against the skin as it moved, an eight pack of muscle across its core—a perfect body many would consider for a man to hope to obtain.
"Max… you are different. Tell me, what can I do for you?"
The voice was the same, yet Max couldn't help but cock his head slightly.
It has evolved…
"You have changed. An evolution?"
Laughter of amusement came from its mouth as it laughed, nodding before turning back at the portal and shaking its head. Every demon behind that had stood close by gave a quick bow and moved away instantly. As they did, the portal began to close.
"I have. You have been a boon for me, and judging from what I see and sense around us, I shall only become greater because of you."
"Your name. What is it?"
The smile disappeared, and the demon stood there a moment, silent as it lifted a clawed hand and tapped the red nail against its chin.
"I did discuss that last time, didn't I? Very well. Just know that my name is between you and I only. To share it would bring great problems for me if the wrong being came in possession of it. Do you swear to not share it?"

“I do.”
“Very well. My name is Sog’thollech, and because of you I have risen to the Demon Lord rank. While I doubt I shall ever challenge the Overlord, there are a few Archons that might be within my grasp if our relationship continues to blossom.”
He is growing stronger as you grow stronger. No doubt a byproduct of your blood and the souls he reaps. To think he has grown that strong…
“Tell me, Sog’thollech, would you agree to keep any future dealings between yourself and I friendly until a time we both agree to break that pact?”
Both eyes narrowed, and the demon crossed its arms, studying Max for a moment.
“You would wish to form a pact with me? Beyond what this spell already has created? Why?”
“In a fight between us, who would win?”
Max’s question made the demon take a step back, almost as if unconsciously, and it crouched slightly.
“That would not be a fight I believe either of us would prefer to have.”
“Exactly. I would rather not have to worry about you, and I wonder if the other might betray each other at some point. I ask that because there is something else I need to ask, and you might find that question… isn’t good for your kind.”
Sog’thollech snorted, and then his grin appeared again.
“You need more essence… I can sense how little you have. So a pact to keep from fighting each other, so I don’t have to worry about you slaying me for mine and I would assume a request on how to acquire more.”
Nodding, Max shrugged. “Two birds with one stone.”
“I’m not familiar with that statement, but I can see the logic behind it. Very well. I shall enter a pact with you.”
“Do we need to swap blood or anything?” Max asked.
Sog’thollech roared with laughter, holding his side as he chuckled a bit longer.
“Silly ideas you people have. Here in this space and with your spell you have summoned me with, our words are what binds us. We simply state the same thing, and it will take place. I will go first. I, Demon Lord Sog’thollech, desire to form a pact of peace with Max Hoste, being unwilling to directly or indirectly attack him until both of us agree to end this pact.”
Max was surprised at the words that had been chosen but began to understand what Bob had said.
He believes that we would win in a fight…
He knows that we would win in a fight.
“I, Max Hoste, desire to form a pact of peace with Demon Lord Sog’thollech, being unwilling to directly or indirectly attack him until both of us agrees to end this pact.”
Pain set upon his chest, and Max watched as the demon winced, a flaming rune appearing on its chest for a moment before disappearing.
[Pact formed with Sog’thollech]
Taking a few breaths, Max felt his bare chest, finding no lasting mark.
“Now then, we are bonded even tighter. I should warn you. Do not align yourselves with those who might seek to fight me. Our pact would prevent you from attacking me as such.”
Filing that warning away, Max nodded and watched as the walls were starting to slowly vanish.
“It’s lasted longer than before. Because we have both grown?”
“Yes. If we desired, we could stay here, but I have things I must attend to in my realm. Those underneath me were not expecting my departure, and I may face a fight when I return, from a foolish demon who does not realize who she is attacking.”
A wide grin came, and Sog’thollech shook a little more.
“She will find it worse for her upon my return, of course.”
Nodding, Max motioned to the sea of monsters around him.
“I need a break. For four days I have fought and slain so many I cannot keep count. I need you to press on that way, slaying everything you can to create for me a path to follow behind. Speed is more important than quantity for me. However, I realize you

most likely want to maximize the number of souls you can claim, so I am willing to sacrifice a little speed for your growth. To make that deal, I would need a few essences to provide me enough that I would feel comfortable in being able to summon you again."
Sog'thollech smiled, and Max felt it wasn't filled with malice or greed but something else.
"You are becoming smarter, Max Hoste. I will agree to that bargain. Do you plan on following me, or can I have a lead so that I can use some abilities without concern of accidentally striking you."
"That will be fine."
"Then we are in agreement. I shall swiftly fight until I must depart, at which point I shall grant you some of my essence so that you can summon me at a later date."
As soon as Max nodded, the walls shattered, the prismatic area they had been in gone.
Max almost flinched when a wave of power washed out from around Sog'thollech, and every creature in the Sonar skill range fell dead.
His eyes went wide as those even further away died, a wave of bodies falling to the floor for almost a quarter of a mile.
A moan that left Max feeling a little dirty escaped Sog'thollech's mouth as his black tongue began to lick his yellow teeth.
"Oh, Max, you have no idea how amazing that first taste was… Count to ten, and then you can follow."
With that the demon was gone, one moment there and the next at the edge of where its ability had been, a new bringer of death had just entered the tower.
Tell me… could we really have defeated him?
Yes… it would have been painful and cost us both dearly, but his strength comes from you. While that deal wasn't a bad idea, it may hurt us far into the future if we survive.
If we make it home and there is a time that does happen, I will gladly pay the price required. For now, all that matters is getting out of this tower and getting revenge. There are now three who I must kill on this world.
Max took the backpack he had been wearing off and opened it up, seeing the food and water inside, and waited for Bob to verify it was safe. After hearing that it was, he guzzled down a single waterskin and then slung the pack over while chewing on the dried hunk of meat.
I guess we should catch up with him.
Yes, and you're going to need to run to do so.

49 Chapter 322

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/1998758/chapter-322 2025-01-10;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/101995/take-on-me]

Chapter 322
Max couldn't help but run his hand through his shaggy hair. It had grown longer, and often he had considered cutting it off, but something inside wouldn't let him.
How many days… how much more?
[2 Strength Consumed]
[2 Constitution Consumed]
I mean, this never ends. Surely it has to end at some point.
Keep pressing on. If you want, I can deal with it again. You can rest.
[3 Intelligence Consumed]
[1 Wisdom Consumed]

No… you fought for seven days… I didn't realize it had been so long. The rest had been wonderful, but that was not right.
Somehow, you keep forgetting that time doesn't work like that for me.
[4 Dexterity Consumed]
Max nodded, his blade having just taken off the head of one of the fast-moving insects who were nothing but claws and teeth.
Another ice storm rained down as Bob managed it, and occasionally the notification of more stats came.
[1 Strength Consumed]
[1 Dexterity Consumed]
[5 Intelligence Consumed]
Some of these are getting stronger again.
Are they? I mean… they are stronger, but still they are nothing to us. Like wheat before a thresher…
Bob chuckled as dozens more fell to the spells he cast.
You are beginning to understand… part of me wishes you had given in… a place like this… a place where I could be free to consume everything… none would have stood before us.
Another three bodies fell, the power of his weapon in a berserker rage impossible for any to stand against him.
Still no skills in a while.
None that you can use or are strong enough. The messages bother me, so I have them silent. Could you imagine hundreds of thousands of messages?
Is that how many we have killed?
No… we have slaughtered so many more.
[3 Strength Consumed]
Each gain only brought death faster to those he faced.
For a while Max had tried to focus on what stood before him, but the fact was Bob was right. He knew they had killed over a million, potentially closing in on that next million over all this time.
How far he had gone, the number of miles they had traveled, was no longer something he was concerned with. All that had done was frustrate him.
It didn't matter if he struck down an insect, a humanoid, crazed dwarf, armored skeleton, crazy lich, or anything else.
Everything in here was just something between him and revenge.
Fine… you win. Take over for another day, but do not go so long as I try to sleep. My mind… it gets harder to stay focused. If you weren't here… I would have probably lain down and given up.
But you're not alone. Dream. Think of your friends.
Before Max handed over the reins, he paused for a moment, feeling the stinging of a small wound as a blade slashed against his thigh when he didn't dodge.
Why did you do that?
The offending attacker was dead, the wound healed, both Regeneration and his skill taking back the health he had lost, all nothing more than a scratch to his growing pool of hit points.
I needed to feel pain… physical pain for a moment. You told me to think of my friends… I have no doubt you are different, Bob, from when we first spoke. I can sense that you aren't the murdering hobo… well, right now you are but the crazed one as before. I needed… to remember what it felt like when it hurts.
Because it has been so long you have forgotten anything but the hatred inside you have for Ezreal, Igarra, and Aimee.
Exactly…
[2 Intelligence Consumed]
[1 Dexterity Consumed]
One day, Bob… no more than that. Promise.
I promise. Now rest.

Max let go, his body never stumbling as Bob took control, moving his limbs like a master marionettist. No one who might have been watching would have noticed any change in the death that came from his weapon.
Smiling, Max closed his mental mind and dreamed about his friends. He dreamed about the woman he loved. Somewhere, deep inside was a longing that he had to return, and he couldn't shake it. No matter what, he would return.
***
Up ahead! You see it?!
Max didn't reply again, his weapon a blur as he danced and weaved through the pressing horde of monsters.
It didn't matter that they were twenty or thirty feet high.
Each body served as a spring board as he jumped off one like a wall, slashing and cutting a head in half, running down its back as it fell and leaping to the next one behind it, driving his weapon through its eye as the shape shifted.
With endless mana, it never stayed the same long, becoming a true tool of destruction.
I do… is it real?!
Light, a glowing bright light came from down the purple tunnel, bright enough to show up over the glow of the ceiling.
Perhaps it is the end? A portal? A crystal?
[6 Agility Consumed]
[2 Wisdom Consumed]
I don't know, but I pray it's real… I can't take this much longer. Forty days… we've been in here forty days.
Don't lose hope, Max. Whatever it is, we are within striking distance. Maybe a few miles at best.
Then let us cut a path of destruction like this tower has never seen.
***
Monsters and creatures poured out of the white portal at a pace that never slowed. It was like a river, flowing nonstop, and each second another creature appeared to replace the one that had just stepped out.
Max couldn't contain the excitement, and neither could Bob as they worked together in tandem, spells flying, weapon slicing, and monsters falling to the ground.
These are the same level as the last ten minutes.
Yes… I think I can tell it takes longer now for them to ramp up in strength.
But would they continue forever growing stronger? I mean… not that I want to stay here any longer than possible, but would you say that in time, there would be no limit to how strong they became or eventually the tower would be unable to increase the strength of what we face?
I do not know, but we need to get you out of here. To entertain that thought tells me you are surely crazy.
Both of them laughed, one voice ringing out amidst the cries of pain and death groans as they ended the life of everything the tower threw at them.
Max jumped from the two-headed snake he had just beheaded, a wall of air forming perfectly under him, and he dashed forward and to the side, his sword now a spear, penetrating the single eye of a cyclops that had begun raising its club to attack.
It's the end… I can see the wall over the brightness of the portal.
Do I just run through it? Touch it?
There are no other options. I cannot sense or see anything else. No switch to turn this off or close the portal. Either way we will find out if this is the end we were hoping for.
Four hundred yards.
Three hundred.
One hundred.
Like a sun now, the white portal shimmered, almost hurting Max's eyes, but he didn't care, butchering everything he had to draw closer as Bob continued his rain of deadly spells.

Two feet.
Touch it.
Max's left hand trembled as he slowly reached for the portal that was forty feet tall. Ignoring the attack that was coming, knowing Bob had just sent an ice spear through its head.
Three inches from the shimmering light, Max felt tears on his face.
You need to try.
But… what if it doesn't work?
Only if you try will we find out. If it doesn't, I promise you, I will ensure that no matter what, we will escape, and I will bring revenge upon the three. I will also never hurt those you love. But if you quit now and never go, in time you will change. You will become what I was, and then everything you say you believe in will be gone.
Forever.
His fingers ached, less than an inch away, but Max knew Bob was right.
If this didn't work, everything would be lost.
He would never see Tanila again.
More bodies fell as Bob held back the tidal wave of creatures, and Max took a deep breath and barely grazed the portal with his middle finger, feeling himself shifting.
Gone were all the creatures and monsters. No longer was there a wall or floor like he remembered as his Sonar skill gave him the layout of his new position.
"Interesting… someone has made it."
The voice he heard rumbled through the area he was in, and as Max's eyes began to work, he saw what had made it.
A dragon.
Blinking a few times, Max fell to his knees, not caring that he stood in a stone arena-like area that was easily a few miles around and half a mile high with a large silver dragon looking at him.
We're free… we did it.
We are. Now stand up and prepare for what comes next.
Clearing his throat, Max wiped the tears he knew ran down his cheeks, and studied the gaze of the beast that was studying him.
"Are you the champion?"
A loud thrumming sound echoed around the room, and the dragon sat up, shifting some as it cracked its neck.
"A champion? I am nothing more than a prisoner. Forced to sit here and face anyone who might make it. You should know, you're the first."
Max took a deep breath and blinked, moving a little closer to the beast, holding his weapon, which was currently a spear, as non-threatening as possible.
"How can you be a prisoner? Did Igarra capture you?"
Gone was the thrumming, and a growl came, the dragon shifting on its feet and lowering its head at Max.
"Do not say that name… it is nothing more than a lie… she bound me with this!"
It raised a claw and wiggled a silver necklace that Max immediately recognized.
With his left hand he reached up and ripped the stone away with his skill, revealing the collar around his own neck.
"I know how you feel."
The dragon moved back slightly, a gold eye studying the binding around his neck.
"Did she capture you?"
"No… another tower climber. One like me. Named Ezreal."
The dragon spit, a glob of saliva creating smoke and steam as it sat on the purple-tiled stones.
"She does not like that one, and neither do I. He is a trickster and very dangerous. Tell me, how did you manage to escape?"
Should I tell him?

I’m guessing he is bored and lonely. At some point we must fight, and right now you can relax, eat that last bit of food, and drink those last few drops you had been saving. That way when we do fight, you will be at your best.
Can we win?
Bob didn’t reply, and Max motioned to his backpack.
“Do you mind if I grab a drink and a snack real quick? It’s been a long forty days.”
“Forty days,” snorted the dragon. “That seems impossible… you survived that long?”
“Yeah… let me eat and drink something, and then I’ll tell you the story. I’m guessing at some point we’re going to fight, but surely you wouldn’t mind a conversation beforehand.”
The dragon snorted, smoke drifting up from its large nostrils, but it nodded.
“For a human you are smarter than most. Go ahead and get a snack. I will wait. Just do your best to ensure the telling of this tale makes me feel waiting to fight was worth it.”
Chuckling, Max nodded and dug into the backpack.
“Oh, trust me, it’s well worth it.”

50 Chapter 323

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2000648/chapter-323 2025-01-10;

Chapter 323
“Impossible… for one of your kind to be so strong, and yet I do not feel like you are boasting or lying. Yet here you are, uninjured and standing before me, and I can see that you are confident by the stance you have taken.”
“I felt no need to lie to you, Kuneoss. Now tell me, must we fight? I would prefer to not kill you.”
Thrumming echoed again as the dragon stood up on all fours and began to stretch.
“Max Hoste… you are a funny one. Again I sense you believe you can win, but there is a reason I am here. If she had not locked me in this place, I would have devoured her. I would be the one running Quan Ma.”
“So if I kill you, I should be able to kill Iga… her.”
A snarl had formed as Max started to say her name, and stopped when he had.
“I would assume she is far stronger than I am now. She has had hundreds of years to acquire power. Even worse, if what you said is true, I doubt I would provide much of a challenge to her.”
“You never told me how you were captured. How did she manage to collar you? Surely that would be hard to do if you were stronger.”
A breath of hot air surged through Kuneoss’s snout as he glowered at Max.
“Trickery… deception… We had an egg, and she had me fly all over the world, seeking something for her while she stayed by it. When I returned, she offered to let me sleep, to feel our child while she went and searched.”
Kuneoss went silent, and Max stood there, just watching the majestic dragon in the light of the arena shift slightly.
“She used my love of our child. I never realized how treacherous she really was. I always thought my strength would overcome her weakness, but as I slept, deeper than any other time, she put the collar around me. Once it was on, I was as weak as a dragonling.”
He began to growl, raised his head high, and roared, the noise filling the entire arena.
“She collared me! The destroyer of life! Everyone feared me! Now, none remember who I was!”
His large chest filled as he took another breath of air and let it out again, the second roar louder than the first.
Then Kuneoss hung his head and went silent for half a minute.
“She abused me and told me what I would do. If I did not protect this tower, she has promised to sell our child.”

“How has the egg not hatched?” Max asked, feeling a few tears had escaped without realizing it.
“She is a bitch! She keeps the egg in a dimensional pocket so that it doesn’t age, doesn’t hatch! Occasionally she comes here, every forty or eighty years, and taunts me with it, lets me look upon it, never allowing me to sense the child I know that is within!”
Both yellow eyes were like embers, glowing and filled with energy.
“If I do not destroy you, she will sell our child, and I will not allow that to happen!”
His shout came, and the dragon squared up, taking a few larger steps backward.
“Prepare, Max Hoste. Our time of talking is done. You have given me something I needed, and as such I will not fight without giving you a chance. Make the first move, and pray it is worthy of a swift death.”
Thoughts?
We go all out. Nothing gets held back.
“Kuneoss, one last thing before I start. Your egg. How big is it?”
Max’s question caused the dragon to turn its head slightly.
“Why do you ask?”
“Because after I free you, I shall go and kill her. Then I shall find your egg and take it somewhere to be free. I’ve met another dragon before, and I know that each of you gets to choose the kind of dragon they want to be.”
Both eyelids on Kuneoss blinked rapidly three times, its large jaw descending slightly.
“You would do this? This is not some trick to make me fight less?”
Shaking his head, Max smiled.
“No. I wouldn’t do that. I’m just the kind of man who believes no one should be chained up or used as a tool to enslave others.”
Kuneoss began to breathe heavily, over and over until after about eight breaths he stopped.
“One attack. I shall give you one attack. Land the best one, and hope it is strong enough to prevent me from what I must do. My collar won’t let me go easy, but I can do that. Make it a good one.”
“It will be,” Max said with a chuckle.
Let’s do it.
A smirk crossed his lips as Bob tried out something they hadn’t used yet.
[Ultimate Form]
His body began to grow, and Max couldn’t help but realize that for the first time in his life he was going to be tall.
Power and strength began to flow through him, and then suddenly he started to choke.
The collar around his neck wasn’t growing like the rest of his body or the pants and boots he wore.
Kuneoss’s head lifted up and backward as he watched Max choking, teeth showing as its lips pulled back.
I can’t breathe!
The skill! It won’t stop!
Blood flowed down his neck, and Max felt pain as his body continued to swell and the metal ring fought against the bulging neck.
[Regeneration]
What was supposed to take a few seconds felt like it was taking hours as the ring fought to not let his body expand.
Pain flared through his neck, and Max heard a crack, certain his neck had just broken.
Then a sound of popping came, and then the clinking of metal on stone as air rushed into his lungs.
[Ring of Binding Removed]
[All Restrictions Removed]
Neither Max nor Bob said a word as he glanced down and saw what he had already felt through Sonar.

There on the purple stone was the silver neck ring, no longer keeping him captive. His body felt alive, and only needing a moment, Max reached out with his mind. Power surged through him as his Conqueror of the Broken Prince appeared in his hand.
We're… free…
That skill… non-bound magical items break.
We could have been free all this time if we had just done that?
Apparently… Now I feel like a fool. We saved that ability for so long, wanting to use it as a trump card… All this time we could have been free.
Max stored his weapon, reached up, and rubbed his neck, wiping the wet blood that had come from when it had torn his skin.
"You… you broke your own collar! How?!"
Max took a step back, feeling his larger body and the power within it as he moved.
"I used an ability. I… I didn't realize it would do that."
Both of them stood there, staring at each other, in shock and awe at what had taken place.
Then the silver dragon's eyes widened.
"That mark… impossible! You have met him!"
Clearing his throat, Max realized what Kuneoss was talking about.
"You can see it now?"
"The collar… it hid the mark… but still, you bear something you shouldn't. How?!"
Sighing, Max shook his head.
"That is a story I promised I would not reveal. I earned it. In fact, I earned a lot of things."
Touching his inventory for the first time in so long felt impossible to describe. When the dragon tooth appeared in his hand, the silver dragon backed up a few steps.
"A tooth? From him?! It is! I can see the power radiating from it!"
Storing it, Max nodded and set himself.
"I don't have a lot of time left on this ability. I mean what I said, Kuneoss. If I win, I will find your egg and give your child a life, not one of slavery but of freedom."
Two seconds passed, and then a large tear fell from the silver dragon's golden eye.
"I now know you will honor that promise. I must fight, and when I do it will be with everything that is within me, but I also have vowed to give you one free attack. For the future of my child, I pray to the one who gave you that mark it strikes true."
Giving a slight bow, Max began moving toward the dragon, his steps covering even more ground than usual.
[Stat Only Check - Expanded]
*****
Max Hoste
19-Year-old Human Male
STR: 948+1976
DEX: 926+1008
CON: 972+1050
INT: 918+901
WIS: 905+890
*****
That strength bonus… from this skill…
Yes. Now stop staring like an idiot and attack.
Max dashed forward, his will set as he repeated the same attack he had used on a golden dragon that felt like a lifetime ago.
[Blink]
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Stealth]
[Power Strike]
[Magic Strike]
[Weakness]

[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Strike]
[Berserker]
[Rampage]
There was the sound of scales shattering.
Bones were vaporized in a second.
Everything that had been there at the back of Kuneoss’s skull was gone.
The brain that was protected by a skull most would never imagine could be shattered was half missing.
Particles of silver scales caught the light as they fell to the ground, reflecting the glow of the arena.
Power surged through Max as he fell from the height he had been at, using everything he had to get into position, taking advantage of the one free attack.
A cold bath of fire raced through his body and bones.
[Bonus Stats Consumed]
[75 Strength Consumed]
[75 Dexterity Consumed]
[75 Constitution Consumed]
[Stat Milestone 3 Reached]
[Strength of 1000 acquired]
[Evolution is required for Milestone Upgrade]
[Stat Milestone 3 Reached]
[Dexterity of 1000 acquired]
[Evolution is required for Milestone Upgrade]
[Stat Milestone 3 Reached]
[Constitution of 1000 acquired]
[Evolution is required for Milestone Upgrade]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Power Strike - Epic has been upgraded to Power Strike - Legendary]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Skill does not match being’s body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Intimidation - Epic has been upgraded to Intimidation - Legendary]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match being’s entity type]
[Power stored for future use]
Pleasure beyond comprehension flooded his soul as whatever hadn’t been converted to a skill he could use instead was given to Bob.
So… close… We are almost there…
Max slid off an airwall that had appeared and landed on the back of the dragon.
There was no final words to say. No last command to do right.
Whatever spirit Kuneoss had once had was gone, and it pained Max that it had to end this way. Even the power he desired for so long left a bad taste in his mouth as he slid off the body of the magnificent creature.
Blood was beginning to flow from the gaping wound, a smell of acid and sulfur as it burned and popped on the stone.

A tongue lay partially out of the head that was turned toward him, all light that had once filled those golden eyes gone.
You need to harvest what you can, and you know it.
Bob’s statement was true, but for a moment, all Max could do was move to put a hand on the still-warm scales. Soon the body would be cold.
Closing his eyes, Max did what he felt he needed to.
“Kuneoss, I made you a promise, and I intend to keep it. May your spirit fly free in the heavens, never to be collared again.”
With a sigh, he opened his eyes and faced the mountain of flesh and scales before him.
Are you willing to do this? I... I need a minute.
Yes. Rest, Max. I’ll let you know if something arises.

51 Chapter 324

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2000742/chapter-324 2025-01-10;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Hey Everyone!

One of my fellow author's just dropped his story on Amazon! If you're a fan of dystopian societies, give this a read!

https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DH9DTBSS

Chapter 324
So much flesh was bare, the scales removed with a precision that made Max wonder what all his skill could truly do.
He savored the bite of food in his mouth, a breakfast cooked in the Faction house, still okay, having been preserved in the dimensional storage.
Now there were enough dragon scales to outfit an army. Every tooth was in storage, as were the claws and some organs as well.
You didn’t leave much, did you?
Would you have considered leaving anything if your friends were here and this was just another normal creature you killed?
You’re right... still that part of me that isn’t... lost aches for what this dragon... for what Kuneoss must have felt. To have a child used against someone... that is an evil I never want to become.
Sometimes good men must do evil things in order to fight those who are evil and will never do good things. If you do not stop Igarra, many more will suffer. The other… she is something far worse, I am afraid.
The last piece of food in his hand suddenly lost its appeal, and after staring at it for a moment, Max tossed it aside.
He saw the purple portal glowing against the wall. It had appeared after Kuneoss had died.
You’re certain resetting everything was worth the cost?
Choosing between having every skill at our disposal is far more important than the power it took. Yes, it was more than I desired to use, but trust me,

our odds of survival are much greater if we can make it back to town and fight. Now tell me, are you certain you are ready for what comes next?
I will do what I can to avoid the harming of innocents. Still, she must be destroyed.
Then fix your new collar and put on your cloak. We need to not stand out as we return.
Max chuckled as he held the piece of metal in his hands. He had taken the one off Kuneoss's body, easily snapping it, and found there was no power inside. With his magic he had heated it, bent it, healing the wounds that formed from the hot metal until it was the shape he needed it to be.
From there, he put the hot metal around his neck, bending it till it looped and almost touched. The smallest sliver of space lay between the ends.
None of the pain had mattered. Every bit he almost relished as Max plotted what he was going to do upon his rebirth.
Let's go.
Covered in a full cloak from his storage, Max wished for one that hid everything. Wrapped around his chest was the whip, and Max sighed, wishing he could wear everything under the cloak but knew he couldn't. A simple shirt covered the whip, barely able to fit his body anymore as it had grown more muscular.
Happy birthday again.
Max frowned as he stopped a few feet from the portal.
Yet another reason we need to hurry. It has been almost a year. There are others who need to learn the truth.
***
The rabbit kicked, slashed, and bit, yet Max didn't even flinch as he held the creature tight.
"Stop fighting and settle down," he whispered, watching the furball go limp as he recognized Max's voice.
Lowering his hand, the first words he heard were ones of utter shock.
"If… Ifrit?"
"Yes, now answer me truthfully. Did you know Aimee had Romandis murdered?"
Jazzjak shook his head rapidly from side to side, and Max could feel his heart beating, a sudden skip having taken place at that question before returning to normal.
"I… I did not… but it makes sense now… how… how did you find out?"
"I'm going to let you go, but if you try to run, know I won't hesitate to kill you. It has nothing to do with you, my friend. I'm just a little excited right now."
"Understood."
Max took one last breath and set the vorpal bunny down, watching him slowly take a step before turning, eyes widening at the cloaked man who stood before him.
"How? Where? I mean… Igarra?"
Sighing, Max nodded.
"It was a trap, as I thought. Forty days of monsters that never ended and a silver dragon that guarded the portal out. Tell me. Is she still around?"
"She's always around," Jazzjak muttered as he stared at Max. "Forty days? How much sleep did you get?"
"None… they never stopped. Every creature was pressed against another almost. Like a thick stew."
"And… you survived?"
"No… I grew. Now tell me, can you return home and be safe, or will you be in danger if you try?"
Jazzjak hung his head and shook. Both ears flopped over his face.
"I tried… about ten or so days ago. I was denied getting to leave, and the look I received told me that asking again wasn't in my best interest. Since then I have stayed mainly in here. No one comes by. It's been weeks since I saw someone watching the house. I'm certain at some point I'll be forced to leave here one way or another."
"And the skill shards? You're not weak, are you?"
Chuckling, Jazzjak shrugged.

“Compared to who? You? I couldn’t even hurt you. Compared to some? I could easily kill them. I’m a little over twice as strong as I was before, but I could sense your power and knew if I tried, you could snap my head off. Honestly part of me thought you were Igarra, coming to finish the job herself, except there were no golden scales.”
“Listen. You’re not going to like this, but things are going to get bad, and I need you to be safe. I’m going to do something stupid.”
“Worse than usual?” Jazzjak asked with a toothy grin.
“Way worse. I’m going to kill Igarra.”
Max knew the look on his face wasn’t a kind one. He could feel his eyes and how they shook. His face was hot from the rage he felt inside.
“Well, what should I do?”
“Act normal. Go shopping. I’ll slip out a little after. I need to pay someone a visit.”
***
Purple eyes bulged, and the way Quilazmore was struggling to breathe almost made Max chuckle.
“That wasn’t smart,” Max said as he punched the dark elf in the stomach again. “No questions. Don’t ask how I got in here, don’t ask how I’m alive, and for the love of everything, don’t even think of trying to attack me again, do you understand?”
“Yes…”
The squeaky gasp that escaped the elf’s throat reminded Max he needed to ease up a little more.
Quilazmore began to quickly take bigger breaths as his ability to breathe returned.
“You have two choices, as I was saying. One allows you to live, the other is a guaranteed death. Decide which one you want.”
“But… you can’t defeat her… no one can,” Quilazmore stated, his voice still struggling from the pressure Max was squeezing his throat with. “None have succeeded. All have failed. What makes you think you will win?”
“How many times did you bet on me?”
“What?”
Ignoring the confused look, or perhaps the lack-of-air look on the elf’s face, Max gave him a little shake.
“How many times in the arena did you bet on me to win?”
“None… I… I always expected you to lose.”
“And every time I have proved you and her wrong. Now tell me, are you finally ready to bet on me and live? Otherwise, I’ll walk right into her property, you in tow, and you’ll die for certain. Your only other option is to help me. Then if I win, she can’t kill you, and you live.”
Max lifted the little elf off the ground again, bringing their faces close to each other.
“So you better ensure we are able to do what I want; otherwise you’re as good as dead because if I think for a moment you’re lying, I’ll snatch your beating heart from your chest and let you watch as it slowly stops.”
It was hard to imagine a dark elf with skin so black suddenly turn a shade lighter, but Max saw it happen.
“Now then, take me to where Igarra keeps her treasure.”
***
After two bruised eyes, as they were already black around the purple area, Quilazmore finally quit trying to play games as Max broke a third finger.
“I warned you, yet you continue to play games… Do not test me any more.”
He is a stubborn elf and at least committed to his master.
He’s an idiot elf. Surely he must realize now I’m capable of so much more than he thinks…
We’re already this far into her home. I’m simply surprised we haven’t been found out yet.
No thanks to this fool!
The sobs stopped as Max gave Quilazmore a shake.

“Try to lead me in front of guards again, and I’ll end you. I’m serious. I can search the rest of this place on my own and stuff your body in a box or something. It will be days before someone finds you, and then what?”
That question made Max think about something, and inside he groaned, knowing what he was about to do next went against so many things.
“Tell you what… let me make this easier to understand. You know I am aware of where you live. That is how I found you and snatched you away. Perhaps we should return to your home and see if anyone or anything is there. You could watch me do to them what I promised to do to you.”
Max saw the last thread of commitment to Igarra snap when Quilazmore’s purple eyes went wide, and tears began to form.
“Do you understand?”
“Yes…” he managed to squeak out. “But we can’t get through… It’s locked and warded.”
“Let me handle that part,” Max replied, flashing a grin. “You simply get me there.”
***
An hour later, Max stood before a large metal door that gave off waves of energy that warned anyone foolish enough that touching it wouldn’t end well.
That is impressive. I count at least three different spells that are guarding this place, all set to do large amounts of damage to anyone foolish enough to touch it.
“How thick is the door and wall?”
“I’m sorry?” Quilazmore asked, his eyebrow rising slightly. “How thick is it? I don’t know,.I have never been inside. I am only aware of where it is, same as all her servants.”
“To ensure no one ever comes here and ‘attempts’ to enter by mistake?”
“Exactly. No one would be that foolish… well, perhaps other than you.”
Ignoring that remark, Max took a few steps back, grabbing Quilazmore’s arm and dragging him along.
This should work, right?
It *should* work, but if not, you should survive whatever spell tries to kill you, thanks to your Negate Death ability. The real test would be if each one triggers separately… Hopefully, I could reset your ability in time, even if that would cost far more power than I want to think about.
And he should be fine if I wrap him up tight and use the skill?
You keep asking, and I keep telling you, I don’t know. We’ve not tested these skills, and as such, I’m not certain. You could make a copy of yourself, send it into the door, kill it. Then you could toss that little elf at the door and kill him. From there, hopefully the spells don’t reset or recharge, and you can try to run through, dying once, avoiding it, and perhaps then we could get through. Either way, we’re about to find out if this plan of yours works or not.
Max couldn’t help but chuckle and ignored the look Quilazmore gave him as he did.
“Uh… what’s so funny.”
“I know you’re not an elf… or at least you tell me you’re not one, but I’m going to tell you something. I heard elves were lucky, and right now, you better pray that rumor is true.”
“Wait, what—”
Quilazmore’s cries went unanswered as Max wrapped his arms around the tiny elf, having him face forward as he ran toward the door.
“AHHHHHH!” echoed through the hallway as the dark elf probably saw his tiny life flash before his eyes.
[Phasing]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

OK!

It's go time!

DON'T FORGET that book 6 ends 1/13! (Chapter 130)

That's because book 6 goes live on Amazon 1/20!

On 1/20 Book 7 goes live here! (Ignore the fact that we're on chapter 338 atm).

Oh did i also mention that chapter 2 of my webtoon is currently uploading on Patreon?! Super excited as I got the line art for chapter 3 of it, chapter 4 is getting to sketch stage and chapter 5 is about to start! 2025 is shaping up to be a huge year!

52 Chapter 325

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2002622/chapter-325 2025-01-13;

Chapter 325
“AHHHHH… oh, shite!”
Max couldn’t help but chuckle as he popped out the other side of the wall, finding himself in a room that was larger and adorned with more things than Max had ever imagined.
Slowing down his steps, he set the elf down and tried to take it all in.
“Don’t move, touch nothing. In fact, sit right there on that stone, or so help me, I will break both your legs right now.”
It took less than one point five seconds for Quilazmore to sit.
“Good. Now I need to find something. This might take a bit, but I’m serious about what I said.”
“Not moving. Like my legs,” the elf replied before mumbling to himself.
“ *I still can’t believe this fool got in… Igarra is going to kill me when she finds out I helped him… maybe I can set off an alarm…* ”
“You do realize that if you move, thinking you can set off an alarm, I’ll return to your house and torture anyone I find?”
Both purple eyes were completely showing, and Max smiled.
“You never know what someone can understand… so be smart. Don’t move.”
A quick nod came, and then Max heard some sobbing from the elf as he moved away, his Sonar keeping tabs on him.
Focusing on the room, Max saw trophies, bones, armor, weapons, stacks of metal, and other gems that all looked like someone should touch and take them.
His trap sense, however, had already notified him that four objects nearby were not something to be toyed with.
Any thoughts?
Chests lined each wall, stacked four high, and the walls ran for at least sixty feet. Some were ornate while others were simpler.
Besides the idea we need more storage space? Some of this would be great to take, but I also assume that there is a limit to how much time we can really spend here. The fights tonight won’t last that long, even with four fights scheduled.
I guess we check every one?
Max began opening chests, part of him surprised they weren’t locked, but then again knowing what Igarra must believe about her treasure room, he understood why.

Countless things he couldn’t recognize filled each one, treasures and valuables from places he could only imagine.
Occasionally his crafting skill would call out that something was worth having, and he would quickly select it, tossing it into his storage, glad to know this room wasn’t warded against dimensional storage.
Time ticked on, and even with the pace he was setting, it felt like it took forever as he finished checking one entire wall.
Still nothing but at least we did find some good items…
None of those will help us with your plan.
Sighing, Max began to move toward the other side of the room when a section of the wall stood out. A faint border was at the edge of it, and Max paused as his trap skill showed him there was a shimmer to the entire wall.
Well now that doesn’t look right… a whole wall with a trap on it?
A good place for someone to hide something. We’re going to phase through again, aren’t we?
If you don’t mind, good sir.
A groan came, and Max smiled as he saw the notification
[Phasing Cooldown Reset]
Turning, he whistled and made sure Quilazmore was looking at him.
“I’ll be back. Just know if you do something stupid, I’ll leave you here, and she’ll find you… Perhaps she won’t kill those you love… but know that I will.”
The dark elf shook his head up and down and then side to side, obviously unsure of which way to move it.
Running toward the wall, Max jumped up slightly.
[Phasing]
Two seconds passed, and the wall was still there, and panic set in.
Bob…
I’m ready.
Finally, after much longer than he had anticipated, the room he felt was behind that trap washed over him, and a half second later his ability ran out.
That was waay closer than I wanted.
A dim hum came, and Max saw that in this small twelve-by-twelve room only one thing was here.
Glancing up he saw the light gem that gave off a yellow glow on one wall.
In the middle was a normal-looking wooden chest. It had no designs, and if one had seen it in a warehouse filled with chests, it probably would have been the last one to check.
It was slightly larger than the others, and Max took his time, trying to let his Sonar and trap skill detect anything at all.
I sense nothing.
Coming to stand before it, Max lifted the lid and gazed into the swirling vortex inside.
The egg…
A silver egg seemed to twirl and spin in the void, begging to be held. Gazing upon it, Max wondered just what was going to happen when he put this in his own storage.
Here goes nothing. Let’s get ready. I don’t trust that elf…
[Phasing Cooldown Reset]
When he touched the egg, it surprised him as it popped out, requiring him to quickly use two hands to support it. It was easily the size of Fowl, perhaps even a little taller.
“Damn you’re heavy!” Max exclaimed.
Something shifted inside, and Max felt his heart jump at that.
It’s alive!
Of course, you idiot! Why else would we be here? Now store it, and let’s go!
Taking a deep breath, Max stored the egg, praying it would be ok, and then turned, racing back toward the other room.
[Phasing]
Quilazmore’s eyes were still just as wide as when he left, and the elf hadn’t moved an inch that Max could tell.

[Phasing Cooldown Reset]
“Alright, time to go,” Max stated as he made his way to where the elf was.
“Remember, say anything you die. Do something, you die. Piss me off, and everyone you love dies. Any questions?”
Shaking his head, the purple-eyed elf grimaced as Max yanked him up off his feet, wrapped his arms around him, and ran toward the door.
At least he isn’t yelling.
***
“IGARRA!”
This is the dumbest thing I have ever seen you do… I mean couldn’t you have sent a letter?
And then the messenger would have been killed… no… this is the best choice.
At least you’re smart enough to have purchased one of those
“IGARRA!”
Over forty guards all stood about fifty yards away, weapons drawn, chattering but none approaching as Max waited outside the estate. Crossing the gate had probably set off some notification as the first two guards showed up moments later and the number who came continued to grow.
Only one had been dumb enough to attempt to stop him, and after delivering a single backhand, leaving nothing but a pair of legs, no other guards tried.
“Please, one of you tell me you have informed her that I am here.”
“You’re going to die! Who do you think you are?”
Max sighed, well aware that either the woman was intentionally letting him stew or someone was taking their sweet time getting her.
“You realize that she put me in the tower?” Max called out. “Which means if she did that and I’m standing here, none of you have a chance. Even if you attack at the same time.”
His announcement made more than half of them shift, not stepping back but their weapons raising slightly higher in the air.
“That’s not possible!” shouted the lionkin, who felt the need to keep arguing. “No one has ever—”
Max covered the fifty yards, ripped the heart from the lionkin’s chest, and was back where he had started before any could react.
Bob chuckled as Max held out the still-beating heart, the leader of the guards looking at it for a second before looking at the hole in its armor and chest before tumbling to the ground.
It was at that moment every one of them started to move.
“DON’T!”
Igarra’s voice froze them all, and the master of this place finally moved forth from the top of steps that led from her house.
“About time,” Max muttered as she walked slowly, taking her time, each step seeming to be like she was in a slow walking contest.
“You survived… that means—”
“Kuneoss is dead.”
She winced just slightly, but didn’t change her pace. He could see her eyes trying to get a read on him.
“I’m not sure what’s more impressive, that feat, the fact you survived, or how you stand here right now, acting like I won’t strike you down as you just did to my guard.”
Max started to chuckle and then began to laugh louder, ignoring the glare she gave him as he mocked wiping a tear from an eye.
“Perhaps you should think a little harder yourself,” Max replied with a grin. “Why would I, someone who defeated what you expected to kill me, return here when I could have easily escaped the city. Surely if I was concerned about my life, I wouldn’t stand here as I am now. There must be a reason, as we both know I’m not stupid.”
Debatable…
Ignoring Bob, Max motioned to the building she had just come from with a finger.

“Tell me, Igarra. Is there anything so special to you that you would keep it locked away, hidden from everyone else? Something only Kuneoss might know about?”
He watched as her gold eyes widened and her head began to shake. She stopped her approach, one foot just an inch from being set down on another step.
“Go ahead… check, I’ll wait.”
Max was impressed with how fast she moved.
She’s faster. By a bit.
We both expected that.
It wasn’t a minute before the very ground under the estate began to shake, and Max made a shooing motion with his hands at the guards.
“I’d suggest backing up before you get caught up in this conflict and die.”
It took about three seconds before the first one ran, and then, like a damn, they all split, leaving the heartless lion on the ground.
Igarra returned much faster, her mouth frothing as she flew down the steps toward him.
Dancing backward, Max smirked as he shouted.
“Slay me here, and you’ll never find it!”
A roar that didn’t match her tiny frame burst forth, and Max saw the shimmer of what he knew waited to burst forth.
“I will peel the skin from you and make you tell me!” she shouted as she skidded to a stop.
Weapon at the ready, Max shook his head, the whip now a spear.
Even with only a dozen yards between them, each of them was ready for what might come, and Max could sense the potential power radiating from Igarra.
“You could try to, and while I won’t say it's my favorite option, that one won’t work, and you probably realize it by now. You can threaten me all you want, but you hold nothing over me anymore. Or you can play by rules. One way gets you what, the other has the egg far away where you’ll never find it and a note to be given to the young dragon about what happened to its father.”
Steam began to rise from the golden scales, and every breath Igarra took put off heat.
Careful… do not provoke more. Give her the options before she can’t hold back.
“Fight me in the arena,” Max quickly added. “If you win, you will receive a letter from someone in the city with the location of the egg.”
“Bah, I could raze the city and make them tell me where it is!”
“No, you couldn’t, and you know it. The one who has the letter won’t turn themselves in, no matter what you offer. No one is foolish enough to believe that. Fight me, before everyone, tomorrow night. Winner takes all.”
Max could sense the power in her legs shifting, and he wasn’t sure if she was going to come at him.
Igarra stood there, bent for battle, waves of heat rolling off her entire body as each breath sounded like thunder.
“When you die, and you *will* die,” she exclaimed, pointing a claw at him, “I will take my time watching you suffer so that all may know this is my world!”
“One last thing before I go. Make sure Ezreal knows I am alive.”
Those golden eyes looked ready to send beams of pure energy at him as he spoke.
Giving one last nod, Max slowly began taking small steps backward, never letting the tip of his spear stop pointing at her.
“Tomorrow you’ll get a chance. Attempt anything, and know the egg will never be found.”
Another roar escaped her throat, growing more primal by the moment.
“Run home, little human. Tomorrow, I shall gather your bones for my trophy room.”
Max took another step, each one slowly adding distance, until he felt he was at the edge of her property.
Not once had she moved, and he could still feel the rage seething from her.
Here is hoping tomorrow we don’t die.

That was always the plan, I thought.

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Chapter 326

It was smart sending that rabbit away. Do you believe he will truly be safe?

Max nodded, his foot tapping as Jazzjak's did all the time as he sat on the stone bench in the room that helped decrease his skill cooldowns.

If we don't win, no one will be safe.

This battle will be the hardest one we have ever faced before. Know that if it takes every ounce of energy I have saved to keep us alive, I will use it.

He could feel the tinge of frustration from Bob, knowing that as close as his skill seemed to be to evolving, there was no other option.

I still feel we could have escaped and tried to find Ezreal and get our revenge.

You and I both know that wasn't going to work. I have no idea which way to head and how long would it have taken for us to run there, hoping to retrace our steps and perhaps be found by him? He believed we were dead, so it would be safe to assume that he wouldn't be outside in that place he dropped us.

How you are sometimes so smart and other times ignore common sense amazes me. You see one person in need, and you forget the danger helping might put yourself or someone in.

Max just smiled, running his hand on his armor under his chest.

With everything finally equipped, he felt somewhat better prepared for what was coming. The stats didn't seem like much anymore, and now he wished he had kept the rings with the percentage gains.

Any idea on what tomorrow will bring?

Death… either she dies, or we die and so many others.

Frowning, Max closed his eyes, taking a deep breath, and lifted his hand to the heart necklace he wore.

"Tanila… pray for me."

***

"It's… it's time."

Max couldn't help but grin when he first sensed Quilazmore outside of the house.

"It appears your face has healed and that you haven't been killed yet. Tell me, did Igarra question you at all?"

The dark elf shook his head rapidly, eyes fixed on the ground.

"No… the rage she was in… none of wanted to be near her… whatever you have done, know that she plans on ripping you limb from limb."

"I hope so, otherwise I'd be upset if this fight was a bust."

Coughing, Quilazmore glanced up at Max and froze.

"You… you believe you can defeat her! She is a god! This is her world!"

"No, my little friend, you are wrong, she isn't a god, and this isn't her world because if it was, Ezreal wouldn't be on this planet, and something tells me there are others elsewhere that have power. Igarra is strong, but she isn't invulnerable."

"But… but no one has ever been a threat to her," he replied, his voice trembling as he spoke. "You don't understand! She has killed so many and ended their lives before they knew it. Surely you don't believe you are stronger than she is."

Max tapped his wooden staff that he had in his right hand against the stone floor, smirking when Quilazmore jumped at his action.

"Tonight you need to listen to what I am going to say. I do not plan on dying, and I plan on having my revenge," Max stated, glaring at the dark elf who took a step back

from him. “When I kill her, two more will die. After that, I imagine this place will be thrown into chaos. It would be wise for you to find somewhere safe.”
Quilazmore swallowed and bobbed his head once and then motioned to the corner of the house they always used to leave for the arena.
“No. No portal. Surely there is another way to get to the arena other than that one.”
His purple eyes widened, and the servant grimaced.
“There is… but she is—”
“Expecting me to appear there? Where a trap might be present?”
“I’m not certain… I was just told to bring you to the arena, but… you are probably right.”
“Then lead me to the arena. Like last time, I’ll carry you, and if I think for a moment you have taken me to a trap.” Max paused and snapped his fingers loudly. “Any questions?”
Shaking his head, the elf hunched over as Max moved to where he was and picked him up, putting him under his shoulder.
“Now then, tell me where to go.”
***
Can you sense the presence of so many here? There are far more beings than ever before.
Max only grunted, as he still had a hold on Quilazmore, and he studied the arena floor from a different box than he usually had for the arena.
“It would appear she got your note,” Max said after the sound of a roar washed over the place. “How long?”
“You’ll know when the announcer calls. I’ll make the portal after the floor forms.”
“After? I thought you did it before,” Max stated. “Why after?”
“Would you prefer me to have you blind to whatever might come while it is forming? She won’t play by the rules, and while I’m not wanting to die by either of your hands, if you lose, I can tell her you made me wait. Besides...”
Max saw the way Quilazmore was frowning slightly.
“Besides what?”
“If you did defeat her… things would change. Perhaps you could take over? Lead us down a new path?”
Shaking his head, Max sighed.
“I can’t, Quilazmore, but maybe if I survive I can help in a small way after I have my revenge. For now, thank you. I’m glad you found me this room.”
“How did you know there was a trap?”
“It’s Igarra. We both know she can’t be trusted.”
***
“I’ve been informed that in just a moment the challenger, Ifrit will join Igarra on the arena floor! This is your last chance to place a wager and witness the power of our blessed ruler of this city!”
Max frowned as he studied the arena floor, knowing already it was stacked against him, but Bob had assured him it wasn’t going to be an issue.
All the time in the tower floor we spent together, working as one. We shall do what must be done, and I shall show you the power of a god.
Still... a mountain range of mountain tops... she is going all out setting this up for herself.
True, but the space is limited. Two miles, and there are three main points, each separated by about a third of a mile. That gives us a lot to work with as each peak is only about three hundred yards above the ground.
And I cannot see more than a half mile above the peaks... is there really a limit?
Not knowing the power it takes and whatever shield must be surrounding it, I would imagine the energy required to potentially contain what might be unleashed has limited this floor more than Igarra would have desired.
Another cough came, and Max stopped frowning, turning to see Quilazmore grimacing.

“We should send you now. She has been waiting half a minute already on the mountaintop. She will start.”
Max held out his hand and smiled.
“Thank you Quilazmore. Sorry I beat you up and threatened your loved ones. Honestly, I wouldn’t have killed them or tortured them. Just you.”
The dark elf blinked a few times and then snorted before chuckling.
“I guess I owe you a thanks for that… except the beating up and making me think I was going to die. Good luck.”
The two of them shook hands, and Quilazmore touched the pad on the wall, and a portal appeared under Max.
No light blinded him, and the arena floor came into view the moment his feet touched down on a rock outcropping near the peak he was starting on.
“Our challenger has appeared! Give Ifrit one last salute before he is burned and torn to shreds!”
Max waved his wooden staff at the crowd, his robe still covering him and everything that was under it.
His gloves showed, but he didn’t care. No one knew what he was wearing except him.
“I AM GOING TO DESTROY YOU!”
Igarra’s shout covered the distance, her voice echoing off the mountainsides.
Even from so far away he could see the power radiating off her, and then the small gold dragonkin shifted.
Goblin shite… she’s huge…
Max, Bob, and every other spectator watched as the ruler of Quan Ma transformed. Her head grew until it was almost twice the size Kuneoss’s head had been. Large golden wings began to grow and flap as her body stretched, requiring the dragon to become airborne as the stone mountain couldn’t support her any longer.
She is much bigger than her mate had been. At least half again as big.
Nodding, Max chuckled as his fire elemental appeared next to him, summoned by Bob as the two of them waited.
Seventy feet? Eighty?
Probably at least a hundred. Fowl is right, you have a problem with knowing how big something really is.
Unable to stop himself, Max chuckled and saw those golden eyes of Igarra narrow.
I think she thinks I just laughed at her.
That was my plan all along.
Igarra raised her head, looking away from Max, and scanned the arena outside the barrier.
“Let this fool’s death be a lesson to everyone who is gathered here today! This is my home! This is my domain! None shall challenge me and still draw breath.”
She roared, and Max held up his hand, watching as the dragon’s wings began to beat faster.
“Can you hurry up?! I’m a bit bored and seeing your fat arse—”
Before the next word left his mouth, she was upon him, covering the distance in a moment, her claw coming in a swipe.
[Blink]
Max was gone from the spot she had struck, seeing the mountain top sheared clean off as her claws raked through the stone.
Each piece that was sent flying came back around, filling the air around the golden dragon, but Max had already made his move.
His newest weapon was in his hand, transformed into a spear and thrusting toward the neck of the beast.
[Stealth]
[Power Strike]
[Magic Strike]
[Weakness]
[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Strike]

[Berserker]
[Rampage]
His stealth failed the moment he had used it, and as his weapon went to strike the scales, Max watched Igarra's body shimmer.
All four strikes hit, and nothing happened to her beyond him being tossed back from the impact of the strike.
She moved just as fast as before, her body twisting, using the momentum of her strike to roll in the air, the other claw coming at him for a backhand.
[Ice Nova]
[Demonic Teleportation]
His spell of ice touched her scales, but Max could tell it had no effect as he vanished to the side, standing on a wall of air, a lightning ball forming in the air where he stood.
A long tail whipped in his direction, light shimmering on golden scales from the fake sunlight of this arena floor, and Max jumped to a stone fragment waiting for him, avoiding the tail by a few feet, a gust of air washing over him from the movement.
Twisting and roaring, Igarra's maw came at him, chomping over and over as he jumped from stones and landed upon her head, landing another strike with his weapon but drawing no blood or even cracking the scales.
Her head snapped upward, and Max went flying, watching as the beast raced after him, jaws wide.
Right before she could chomp down on him, Bob had an air spear appear, Max grabbing ahold of the spell as he let go of his staff, watching it be devoured by the beast as he sped away.
Keep it up! I'm testing her abilities, gauging her speed. She's faster than us but doesn't turn as well, and when we are close, she is limited by her ability to strike and hit.
Max didn't even grunt as he held on to the spell, watching the truth of what Bob had said, the large dragon having to change her direction from upward to where he was headed.
He reached the mountain peak Igarra had started on and took a deep breath, waiting for what was about to come next.
This is going to hurt!
[Armored Warrior]
[Bulwark]
[Harden Body]
Igarra's claw struck, and Max held his spear outward, tip aimed at the paw as big as a two-story house.
The dragon's head jerked upward as the attack came, a gurgling sound from its throat coming as she struck him.
Pain came, and a roar followed as Max felt his spear penetrate the clawed paw that struck him. The impact tore the very rocks beneath him away as he flew across the air, pieces of stone attached to his feet, and his spear yanked free from where it had wounded Igarra.
A gagging sound came, and Max wanted to laugh as Bob used his Stone Mastery skill to control the stone stuck to his feet, watching the beast try to deal with the wooden staff she had swallowed without thinking.
Just like the worm.
Just like—
"BURN!"
The dragon spun in the air as the distance became too great for Bob to control the staff she had swallowed, and fire began to escape from her maw that she started turning toward him.
Goblin shite… this is the bad part…

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Heat and pain beyond anything Max had ever felt so far washed over him. The very hair on his head was vaporized the moment her breath found him, and Max hung there in the air as Igarra beat her wings, billowing out molten fire upon him for what seemed like an eternity.

Every ounce of his body was burned away, the very flesh that had withstood so much gone in a moment.

Only his armor and jewelry managed to survive the heat and flames, as the robe he wore had been burnt up not long after her breath covered him.

Bob continued to summon stones, bringing them to catch him as the pieces melted from the heat, keeping Max airborne.

After over thirty seconds of flames that could have incinerated an army, Igarra cut off her breath, flapping her wings, and retreated a quarter mile.

For a few seconds longer, fire dripped from his body, and when a gust of air from Bob removed the last bit, Max shimmered, his entire body, except for his hair returning to how it had been.

[Negate Death Blow]

“HOW? HOW? AND… That mark?! You cannot bear that mark! How do you have it?”

[Ultimate Form]

Max felt Bob activate the ability on his boots.

[All cooldowns refreshed]

A wall of air held him aloft, a quarter mile above the bottom of the arena floor, and Max laughed as his body doubled in size, his weapon and armor growing to match him as well.

“Oh, Igarra… Surely you can do better than that… I mean, one doesn’t get the mark you are talking about because they are weak. It requires impressing the owner of it. It’s a shame, really. I don’t know if you could impress him at all with what you just did.”

Those golden eyes had been wide, surprised he assumed at what she had just witnessed, but from his taunts, they narrowed, and she sped toward him again.

Sorry about this next part.

Max didn’t say a word, already knowing what was going to happen.

Her mouth opened wide, molten flames still dripping from her teeth, chomping down on where he was.

[Blink]

[Power Strike]

[Magic Strike]

[Weakness]

[Quick Attack]

[Ghost Strike]

[Berserker]

[Rampage]

Once again Bob had the same combo set up, but this time their target was something different. Something each of them knew the dragon had no idea of.

Her left nostril exploded as his skill set him inside the large open cavity, all four strikes delivering power beyond what she had obviously expected or anticipated.

Scales, blood, cartilage, and bones formed a mist and a thick cloud as her head once again thrust upward.

Aware of how it worked, Max drove off her head as she flung it upward, hot air escaping the leftover area of her nasal cavity as she roared in pain.

Bob’s gust of air pressed him down onto her body as he flew upward at first, an ice spear that had formed as the dragon charged, ramming into Igarra’s neck.
Neither anticipated it penetrating, but the point had been to distract her as each could only imagine the pain she experienced from his attack.
His spear crunched into a scale, cracking it along her neck before the dragon twisted, forcing him to retreat from the airborne beast as it rolled in midair.
[Demonic Teleportation]
She’s healing.
Max sensed it as he had been thrust upward, flesh and bones already forming.
I need to touch her with my hands.
Be ready.
[Blink Reset]
[Demonic Teleportation Reset]
[Blink]
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Festering Touch]
One moment Max had been on her side; the next he was in her other nostril, punching her with his fist, before stabbing with his spear.
[Festering Touch Resisted]
Over and over he continued to punch and stab, lodged within the hole on her right side.
Igarra huffed multiple times, trying to free the oversized human booger that was assaulting her repeatedly.
It won’t stick!
[Lightning Bolt]
[Ice Nova]
A cry came from Igarra as both spells went off, and Max could only imagine what kind of pain they were causing in a space where she had no ability to attack beyond hot air that didn’t hurt him at all.
[Blink Reset]
[Demonic Teleportation Reset]
[Blink]
The large claw that had come toward him, aimed up her right nostril was avoided as Max moved from the space, falling down below her as she flew away, not chasing him for a moment.
Air spells slowed his descent, and another air spear provided him passage to the mountaintop he had started on. A large section of its top was missing.
Igarra was flapping her wings, studying him as he stood there, weapon held toward her, seeing the smirk Max wore.
Can we win this?
That remains to be seen. What kind of power she has hasn’t been completely revealed. We need to draw out her skills. Find her power, make her draw upon all the wealth of her accumulated energy. This isn’t going to be won by a single blow by either of us. Whoever wins will do so by bleeding the other dry of everything inside them.
You’re willing to sacrifice every ounce of energy and power you have?
There is only one path. Survival. Now then, say what must be said.
“I guess Kuneoss was right. You are weak. I guess the egg will be mine.”
Once more those eyes narrowed, and like an arrow she came.
[Bulwark]
[Armored Warrior]
[Harden Skin]
Her claw glowed two different colors as it came, and Max could barely catch sight of them as the speed matched a skill he knew all too well.
[Dispel Successful - All Buffs Removed]
Four slashes of the claws raked through him, as power and strength tore through his flesh, cutting his body into dozens of pieces in under a second.

Then the flash of light came, and as the attack ended, Max found himself falling until stone came to catch his feet, twenty feet of stone gone from where it had just been.
A follow up attack came from the other claw, and Max couldn't dodge it,
[Bulwark]
[Harden Body]
[Armored Warrior]
Pain came, and Max sensed the toothy grin as his left arm was severed from his body, a giant gash continuing through his stomach.
[Ultimate Form]
[All cooldowns refreshed]
Even with Regeneration running, the speed at which his lost limb regrew and the gaping wound closed, what happened next surprised all three of them.
That's unexpected...
Bob didn't reply as Max felt himself doubling in size again. In moments he was almost twenty-two feet tall, and he felt like a monster, his body whole once more.
More stones were rising fast, coming to assist his increased size and shape, and Igarra's form shimmered white, vanishing faster than a blink. Now she hovered a quarter of a mile away from where she had been as his spear moved through the empty spot of space she had been attacking from.
I did not expect that either.
He felt weird. His strength was incredible, but the enormous size of his body seemed harder to control.
How many times can we do this?
I don't think we are supposed to be able to do this. I'm not sure the system expected one to be able to reset cooldowns like this and stack it infinitely. Even now I can feel your body struggling to handle this size. Perhaps if you were evolved it could, but we need to not push it past this moment.
Frustration rose when Max learned that this wasn't some trump card he could continue to use until he was over one hundred feet tall.
"HOW? THAT IS NOT POSSIBLE!"
"Didn't you speak to Ezreal? Surely, he told you… unless he didn't and wanted you to lose."
Igarra turned her head toward the outside of the arena, her gaze landing on the box Max knew had been the last one he had used before the tower.
I need to be careful with the mana. Spells are going to be limited. Without a way to gain more, we could run out soon.
Speeding toward her as the stones propelled his larger than usual body, Max watched as the dragon began to move way, keeping her distance from him.
Max felt the stones vanish as he changed positions.
[Demonic Teleportation]
A spear of wind, at least ten feet wide, had just entered his Sonar range, only avoided because of Bob's ability to react in an instant.
"Stop being a coward!" Max shouted as the stones came under him, lifting him up again.
[Blink Reset]
[Demonic Teleportation Reset]
"Show your people you're as strong as you say you are! Or perhaps you really are a coward!"
Gods, she hates you.
Max almost chuckled as the dragon turned and came at him again.
Let's do this!
***
Looking to his side, Max could see another a fresh addition to the hundreds of his shredded limbs lying on the rubble and rock-strewn ground, blood splattered everywhere as his chest heaved.
Gone were most of the mountains' tops, small chunks of scarred stone flesh, drenched in the lifeblood of both him and Igarra.

[Ultimate Form]
We are nearing the limits of what I can do, but so is she.
Coughing and spitting blood as he grew to his twenty-two foot size again, Max glared at the beast, which was glaring at him through her only good eye. She was grounded and unable to fly, both wings torn from clashes between the two of them that felt ages ago.
Acidic blood dripped everywhere, as a patchwork of scales had been ripped from her body. Gone was the majestic creature that had seemed a god to so many, now simply a dragon that had been fighting a war of attrition for almost an hour
“How… no man should be able to do what you have done… gods… gods would die to me…”
Her voice was raspy. No longer did it carry the power it once had, and Max could see the blood that ran from both of her broken and torn nostrils.
“Perhaps that is what I am… a god killer!” Max shouted. “You think you… You think you can kill anyone you want! Take anything you want! But no more!”
We have to try… you and I know this is our only hope now.
This is dangerous… it may not work, but you know I am at my limits… maybe twice more I can reset everything. Everything I had is gone. Are you willing to risk it?
Either we strike now, or she will continue to regain power… my mana comes back fast enough to maintain a few things… hers even faster. Whatever powers she has had, whatever skills they have been, it has been over ten minutes, and Igarra hasn’t activated a single thing. If something resets, then we are doomed.
Then do it. Just know, this is going to hurt.
Everything has hurt… no matter what, though… Thank you, Bob.
A chuckle sounded in his head, and Max smirked, ready for what he was about to do. Igarra shifted lower as his face changed.
“I’m done dodging you, you bitch! I’m going to run this through your heart!” he cried as he hefted his spear upward.
Max took off, running with everything he had, watching as the golden dragon raised her claw, the one working eye tracking his forward movement, preparing for him.
As she swung, Max couldn’t help but know Bob was right. Everything was going to hurt.
[Bulwark]
[Armored Warrior]
[Harden Skin]
[Phasing]
The swipe passed through him, and Max plunged headfirst into her body, searching for what he needed to find as the beast turned and twisted, trying to find where he had gone.
There. Left. Now right!
Each second ticked by slowly as the dragon spun, and her body shifted, Max trying to find what he was searching for.
Inside the dragon's chest, protected by bone stronger than anything Max could imagine was her heart, and he was going to fight it.
As the last second ticked by and Max knew he was close but not quite, there, he felt the darkness of his space shift, his Sonar skill telling him exactly where the beating of the beast’s heart was.
[Blink]
Pain came far worse than anything so far today. Like a mountain smashed every single bit of his being to pieces, crushed under a mountain. No, a world.
Max could hear the roar and cry of pain as Igarra jerked upward, her body spasming as his body and her heart fought for dominance.
The battle of beings raged and happened faster than it seemed as Max felt his life flashing before him in a way it had never done before. Tanila’s smiling face. Her soft lips pressed against his. The way her hair smelled when he held her close.

As his nostrils were filled with the stench of acidic blood and the pain of everything else, it changed, replaced by the fresh flowers and clean scent he knew and longed for.
Max’s eyes flew open as light rushed around him, and his skill changed the course of the battle in a moment.
[Negate Death Blow]
He had lost track of the number of times Bob had reset his skills, keeping the one active, avoiding the death he should have experienced.
Waves of flames washed out from him as the momentum shifted, and Max’s hand touched the dragon’s heart.
[Festering Touch]
[Fire Nova]
For so long the fire familiar had sat there, simply existing, no flame spells cast against Igarra as Max knew he couldn’t damage the golden-armored barrier that encompassed her.
Now, he let it all go.
Inside the space he had created, Max could feel Igarra flailing on the ground as he absorbed an impact from outside the body.
She is hitting herself...
FOCUS! END IT NOW!
[Power Strike]
[Magic Strike]
[Weakness]
[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Strike]
[Berserker]
[Rampage]
His spear transformed, now a sword, and with it the last of his mana was gone.
Max didn’t care as the blade moved with the precision of a butcher, carving up the heart twice his normal size in a second.
Blood that burned ate at his skin, and Regeneration couldn’t help as the mana it required was exhausted.
None of that mattered. He was protected by her own attacks, her very body and bones preventing her from reaching him.
Here he could end this fight, certain now there was nothing she could do to stop him.
The heart tried to regrow, whatever skill she had been saving stitching it back over and over, and each second was a battle of her power and his fury. The initial strike that had carved it to pieces gave him the edge, and each second Max pulled ahead, slowing the tide of healing.
After eight seconds had passed, a wall of air appeared, forcing back the pressing mass of tissue that had been trying to squish and limit Max, giving him a place to fight from, and he continued to carve and hack.
A loud sound came, and Max felt the world shifting again as he fought to stay upright.
Three more slashes, another, and another.
Cold power froze him mid-swing, and Max took a deep breath, gasping at the pain of what he felt.
Max!
[Demonic Teleportation]

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Chapter 328

Breathe!

Max retched as he felt the blood he had ingested burn his lungs.

[Regeneration]

A few seconds passed, and the pain and scarring healed as Max blinked, wiping the blood from his eyes and turned to see the corpse next to him.

Gone was the pain. No longer did the aches and sorrows of what had hurt him exist.

Even the lack of noise from the spectators seemed eerily silent as Max stood.

[Bonus Stats Consumed]

[17,432 Hit Points Consumed]

[4,285 Mana Consumed]

[100 Strength Consumed]

[100 Dexterity Consumed]

[100 Constitution Consumed]

[100 Intelligence Consumed]

[100 Wisdom Consumed]

[Stat Milestone 3 Reached]

[Intelligence of 1000 acquired]

[Evolution is required for Milestone Upgrade]

[Stat Milestone 3 Reached]

[Wisdom of 1000 acquired]

[Evolution is required for Milestone Upgrade]

[System Error - World Champion Defeated]

[Title Granted - World Champion]

[Error - Title Not Applicable for Entity power level]

[Entity is not –]

[…..]

[…..]

[System Error - Abilities Transfer Detected]

[World Champion Abilities do not match Entity power level]

[Abilities cannot be—]

[….]

[…..]

[Twenty-two abilities have been Consumed]

[Consume Overwriting System Error]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill does not match Entity Power Level]

[Consume Overwriting System Error]

[Would you like to learn [Dimensional Space]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill does not match Entity Power Level]

[Consume Overwriting System Error]

[Would you like to learn [System Travel – Block]?]

[Yes / No]

[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Skill does not match Entity Power Level]

[Consume Overwriting System Error]

[Would you like to learn [Dispel Magic]?]

[Yes / No]

Select the second one now!

Max felt his mind selecting yes.

[System Travel - Block - Activated]

[Area of space blocked - one hundred miles]

[Mana upkeep - 1,000 mana per hour]

Max almost staggered as he felt the power pour out from him.

A noise rose up from the audience as the power went from him, and Max gazed up at the boxes that were visible outside the protective barrier.
“We… we have… A NEW CHAMPION! IFRIT!”
Noise filled the air as Max gave a single bow and then smiled as the disc of light appeared under his feet.
[Quilazmore wishes to teleport you]
[Yes / No]
Smiling, Max clicked yes, and his grin grew even bigger as he found himself in his old box at the arena.
A small clap came as Max’s eyes and ears worked immediately upon entering, and he saw Ezreal standing near the screen, eyes locked on him.
“Max Hoste… it appears I misjudged you.”
“Trying to go somewhere?” Max asked as he motioned to the damaged section of the wall where the door was supposed to be, a few stone chips on the floor.
“Would you believe if I said I was excited that you won?”
Max studied the man and his smirk. The outfit he wore was the same black leathers he had worn when he had deposited Max in the jungle.
Every breath and slight movement of the man who had hunted him was read by his Sonar skill, and Max could tell that Ezreal wasn’t happy about this current change of roles.
He has become trapped in his own stone room.
“Not going to leave? I mean surely you could just teleport right out of here.”
Both silver eyes narrowed, and Max could sense Ezreal’s hands clenching and unclenching.
“Your black skill… I should have killed you,” he declared, his voice almost a hiss. “You should be thanking me! It is because of what I did that you are alive and stronger! I can sense the power washing off you! Before me you couldn’t have—”
Max crossed the room, his left hand gripped around Ezreal’s throat, slamming the hunter into the wall, placing the tip of his spear against the man’s chest.
“THANK YOU?! I WILL NEVER THANK YOU!”
“Wait! Wait! I have gold! Treasure! I can take you back! Without me, how will you return home?!”
Each word from the hunter he had feared felt like nothing but an attempt to draw breath for another second. Even the way Ezreal grabbed at Max’s wrist and tried to pry away his grip did nothing.
You have grown stronger. Much stronger because of him… All this… feels like a game of the gods… someone pulling strings, making one fool act. Tell me, Max, are you committed to this path?
His hand shook, causing the struggling hunter to shake as he was pressed against the stone walls. Both eyes would have sent beams of light at Ezreal and burned the silver eyes he had away if that skill had been his to command.
Can you take his power? Can you steal his ability that will allow me to return home?
I can. Right now I am like a cup of water, full to the rim. If you add another drop, the bubble that struggles to stay in place and not spill over will burst, and I shall be able to evolve. Igarra… she provided more power than I could have imagined.
I saw… did you consume twenty-two skills for yourself?
You noticed.
A chuckle came, and Max and Bob continued their conversation as Ezreal struggled to breathe as Max’s tip left no question that if he moved too much, blood would spill forth.
There were skills you could not take. The system would not allow it. Even the two I granted should not be possible for you to have. Igarra was strong, but she had many things that were worthless in combat. Most of what she had was based on her power as a dragon that had been feeding off the power of others. That fool is right. Before her putting you in the tower, you

would have not been able to defeat her. Her own foolishness for not striking you down led to her demise.
So if I run him through, I can go home?
He has a skill. No matter what, I shall acquire it. We shall figure out how to get you home, that is my promise.
Max chuckled, smirking as he stared at the confused look on Ezreal's face.
"You know… that question you asked before about a black skill. I guess I can tell you about it. It's called Consume. Everything I kill, I gain their abilities. Tell me, would you like to meet my skill?"
"Meet?" Ezreal asked, his voice trembling as he spoke.
"Yes… Bob is anxious to meet you. You see… Bob is never satisfied and always hungers for more."
Kicks came, and Max could see panic in the hunter's eyes as his face contorted, trying to punch the man who held him by the throat.
He's all yours.
A deep booming laugh came, and Max watched through his own eyes the look of terror that appeared on Ezreal's face, both eyes fully exposed, lips apart and pulled back as a grimace became present.
"Ezreal, was it?" Bob asked, his voice a combination of Max's and his own. "You said you were a hunter… I don't think you truly know what a real hunter is. You see… when a hunter has their prey, when they capture them. They do not play with them. Since, however, you like to play with those you hunt, allow me to show you how I like to play."
The spear vanished, and Max realized that he could now access his dimensional storage, things having changed with the passing of Igarra.
His fist pulled back, and Max knew there was a malicious smile across his face.
"Let me show you my favorite game. Watching your own heart stop beating."
Even with the walls having the ability to block out most sound, those boxes closest to Max's heard a scream that would give many of them nightmares for years.
***
"Guests and citizens of Quan Ma! Your new champion has a message for you all!"
Max fought back the groan he felt rising inside.
Quilazmore had been right, there was chaos as none could depart this place as long as his skill was active. Apparently, it created a barrier around the inner city as well, somehow focused with the way Igarra had built this place.
He stood now on a solid metal floor, Igarra's corpse still behind him, the arena base even with the lowest boxes that were filled with those who came ready to watch his death.
"You are all stuck here until I wish it otherwise. Know I will release you from this place in a moment, but before I do I have a warning."
Moving slowly in a circle, Max made certain his eyes gazed upon as many boxes or in their direction as much as possible as he turned around.
"This city will change some in the coming days. I will not be present as often, but I have two who will serve as my front runners. There are a few worlds I need to visit, and I need to bring about punishment to those who tried to harm me. I suggest no one else find themselves added to my list."
He tried to glare, and look menacing, letting Bob help him control those facial muscles as Max lied through his teeth.
Two silver discs appeared next to him, and a second later Quilazmore and Jazzjak flanked him on both sides.
"These two are my eyes, ears, hands, and feet. They will serve as my mouth and let everyone know that if you choose to not heed their instruction, you shall end up like her."
His thumb was all the attention Igarra's body received.
"There shall still be fights, and there shall still be trade, but I shall show more mercy unless you cross me. Then I shall tear your heart out like I did hers!"

“Now then, I have many things to get in place. Go if you wish, stay if you desire. Do not try to bother me, as I do not need to meet you or want to. Two have died today by my hands, and a third is about to find themselves suffering the same fate. Bothering me might find your name added to the list.”
“Now go!”
[System Travel - Block - Deactivated]
“Ready?”
Max nodded as he sensed lifeforms all over leaving quickly.
“Yes, Quilazmore. It is time.”
***
“Going somewhere?”
Aimee froze as she attempted to get out of the second most inner part of the city, unable to convince the guards to let her through.
Turning slowly, the lizard woman saw Max standing there, bald headed, a spear in his hand and a pair of eyes that burned with rage.
“Ifrit… I… I had not expected you to be here. Congratulations on your victory over Igarra. She was a—”
“Enough!”
Max’s shout cut her off, and he motioned to the doors where the dark elf was already leading the guards away, the well-kept and manicured street become desolate except for the woman he had saved and himself.
“You killed Romandis.”
“What? No! Why would I—”
“Igarra told me,” Max said as he held up a hand and moved toward her.
She started to back up, glancing around, and saw that she was alone.
“You wanted power. You wanted more power. I should have seen it. I know the look of one who seeks only for themselves, and yet I ignored it. Every part of me wanted to believe you were different. I was wrong.”
“You don’t understand! My whole life I was nothing! Now… now I have power!”
“Then show me. Show me what the life of one has given you. Impress me, and perhaps I shall let you live.”
A snarl came, and Aimee didn’t hesitate as her eyes narrowed. The gray scales of her arm glowed, and Max could sense the power she was drawing.
Glass came from under her robes as did stones, puncturing the cloth, and raced toward him.
Inches from striking him. They stopped.
“That’s it? That is all you have? Surely there must be more.”
Aimee roared, charging at him, pulling a larger block of stone and forming a spear, jamming it at his chest.
Max didn’t move. He didn’t dodge. The stone hit his chest and shattered.
A tail whipped around and slammed into his legs, a cracking sound coming as the scales on it shattered.
Before she could recover or howl in pain, Max had her by the throat.
A growl rose from inside him. Anger, pain, hatred. Like a volcano that was about to erupt he was seething and overflowing.
Don’t give in. Remember who you are and what you are going home to.
Max lifted the kicking lizard woman upward and yelled, his voice echoing off the empty street.
Everything he felt was raw. He was angry but even worse was the betrayal he felt.
Lowering her so that her feet touched the ground, Max shook his head, ignoring the bulging eyes.
“I won’t kill you. I saved you. Had you just trusted me and waited, you would have been far stronger than you are now, and you could have seen true power. But you didn’t. Still punishment must come.”
His spear moved with surgical precision, shattering both shoulder sockets, breaking each hip socket in a moment.
Tears and howls came as he dropped Aimee to the street.

“You have been found guilty of so many evils. As such your life has been forfeited.”
Max turned and started to walk away.
“Jazzjak… she’s all yours.”
From the shadows of a building, the white rabbit appeared, glowing red eyes sparkling as his teeth grew about four times their normal size. Each of his padded paws grew, and six-inch claws formed.
Gone was the tiny rabbit that had looked so cute. Replaced in a moment was the vorpal bunny he had been warned about.
A single scream made it from Aimee’s throat as Jazzjak carried out the punishment.
Each step away from the carnage behind him felt lighter as Max knew what would come next.
I’m ready… we need to get home.

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Chapter 329
Max reread the descriptions for the two skills he had acquired from Ezreal.
[Skill Description - System Travel - Planetary]
*****
System Travel - Planetary - Common: The user is able to travel between planets they have visited once a month. Travel is instantaneous. Anyone or anything they are touching may be transported with them, provided they have the strength to carry the object. In order to add other locations to travel to, the user must find another means of arriving on the planet. One location may be set for arrival on the planet. Location may be changed once a month. Unable to use this skill to travel to the arrival point on the current planet. Some abilities and locations will prohibit travel to planets.
*****
[Skill Description - Planetary Travel - Waypoints]
*****
Planetary Travel - Waypoints - Uncommon: The user creates four waypoints on any planet they have visited. While on that planet they may move between those waypoints. Travel is instantaneous. Anyone or anything they are touching may be transported with them provided they have the strength to carry the object. Waypoints may be changed but require two weeks to be reset. No waypoint may be within ten miles of another. Each waypoint may only be visited twice per 24 hours. Some abilities and locations will prohibit travel to waypoints.
*****
So… I can leave right now…
You can, but you need to consider what you are going to do. Will you simply abandon these two so soon?
Max frowned as he watched the pair arguing about how different things should be handled.
“Enough… I’m tired, and I need to leave.”
Both Jazzjak and Quilazmore immediately went quiet, turning their attention from each other to where Max was slouching in a chair.
“But… there is so much that must be in place,” the dark elf stated. “You do realize the whole city is in a state of flux!”
Clearing his throat, Max forced himself to sit up.
Exhaustion finally hit, and the bottoming out of all that energy Bob had run through, then the sudden resurgence of it to where his skill was waiting to evolve had been a tiring ordeal.

The weight of all the death he had caused felt crushing, and knowing more might come was even worse, but all he could think about was Tanila.
“Jazzjak, you need to handle the administration side of what I gave you. Quilazmore, you need to manage the arena and the other areas you’re familiar with. Each of you has skills and experience that will allow this world to continue to function.”
Standing up, Max pointed at the wall where dozens of large dragon teeth were leaning against even more golden scales.
“Those are how you will ensure people follow your orders. The guards are loyal to you all. None of them felt the need to question my orders, and they will keep most of the people in place. The rest who want those items will do whatever is required to get them. You two must ensure that everyone knows that only by obeying the rules I laid out, will be how they can get them. If need be bluff that you will summon me.”
“But we can’t,” Jazzjak replied. “You yourself said it will take a month before you can return here. Will you return here?”
“Hopefully in time. But do not forget the tower appears to be open and no longer set on that floor that killed anyone who entered it. Tell them that is my gift. All who are strong enough may enter.”
A snort came from Quilazmore, who was grinning.
“That alone will earn the obedience of most.”
“So make it happen. You two are the only ones I can entrust with things here. While this world is hard, you have been given a chance to thrive. I expect”—Max paused as he held both of their gazes for a moment—“each of you to work together. Gather your families, keep them safe, and help them grow stronger.”
The vorpal bunny moved to where Max was and bowed low.
“I am grateful, Max Hoste, for your friendship.”
Chuckling, Max held out his hand and smiled as the rabbit shook it.
“Friends don’t bow; they shake. Quilazmore, come here and shake my hand.”
Immediately the dark elf moved, grinning and held out his hand, almost giggling the entire time they shook.
“Now then. I need to go. Somewhere is a woman I love and family I need to find. Be safe, and hopefully when I return, I won’t have to kill anyone.”
Each of them chuckled and took a few steps back, unsure what was going to happen next.
Alright, Bob. Let’s go home.
No flashy lights or magical powers that sent waves of energy came. Instead a simple portal blinked into existence and then was gone, leaving a white, furry vorpal bunny and a black-skinned dark elf to manage a world that had always been built around killing.
***
Sunlight hit Max’s face, and the air seemed sweeter as he breathed it in.
Sounds of weapons were ringing out with shouting, and Max spotted Tom with about twenty people on the sparring ground, working through attack patterns and other techniques.
Tanila… I’m home.
He began to walk toward the group. His armor hadn’t changed at all, which was why when someone spotted him, they froze, getting a shield to their face from their sparring opponent.
“WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? Don’t stand around! You should be—”
Max couldn’t help but grin as he saw Tom’s eyes find him, and the man rubbed them a few times before he sprinted toward Max, leaving everyone on the field in shock.
“SETH! SETH!”
Laughing, Max nodded and held out his arms as the older man didn’t pause his charge, grabbing him in a bear hug and shaking him.
“You! You’re alive! She always said you were, but I wondered if… my god you’re bigger! What the heck has happened?!”
“One question at a time, please. Tell me Tom. Where is Tanila?”

Faction members began jogging toward the pair and Tom stood there shaking his head, stepping back and looking Max up and down a few times.
“Tom. Where is Tanila?”
“The tower. She’s in the tower with Dexic and the others. The forty-eighth floor if I am correct. Everett is going to flip! You need to come inside.”
Max shook his head, smiling at those who were slowing down and coming to look at him in shock, hearing the stories of how he had vanished for months.
“When did they leave?”
“What?”
“Tanila and the others. When did they enter the tower?”
Shaking his head, the trainer finally realized what Max was wanting to know.
“Oh gods… two days ago, I think? Surely it’s only been two days. It’s been taking weeks for them to clear each floor, so you won’t see them for at least five more days. Plenty of time to—”
“No. Tell Everett I’ll be back. I need to go and find her.”
“Find her? How? You hadn’t finished the fortieth floor in the tower. There is no way—”
Tom saw the smirk on Max’s face and stopped, finally understanding the aura he felt coming from Max.
Without waiting, he moved to where his trainer was standing and grabbed his hand, yanking him close and giving him a quick hug.
“Tell Everett I’ll be back soon,” Max whispered.
“But—”
A rush of air was all he felt as Max jumped into the air, and none could see the spear of air he grabbed on to, taking off across the city like he was flying.
***
“Wait!”
Ignoring the guard who had held up a hand, Max fell from the air and landed outside the portal.
“You can’t—”
“Seth Pendal, don’t worry, I’ll be back.”
Touching the portal, a window appeared, and Max selected the fortieth floor.
***
It is a good thing I have so much power that the small amount required for one spell means nothing.
Or the fact I can easily fly across most of these floors or simply run through and slaughter everything.
Or that… it is a shame you cannot collect all those gems.
They mean nothing to me right now, and you know it. Only one thing does.
Max heard a chuckle in his head as he raced through the portal, ignoring every creature that stood in his way. None were fast enough, none were strong enough, and even without his weapon they were dead if he simply ran through them.
“How?!”
Max ignored the guards who stood outside the portal, the number of them having increased by dozens.
“Seth!”
He recognized the voice and the one who had called it.
“Major Greyson, I’m afraid I don’t have much time. I’m trying to find my friends. I’ll be back in a moment, I need to go fight the forty-fourth floor real quick!”
“But, you’re alone! Where have you been and what do you—”
“Just wait, I’ll be right back!” Max shouted as he ran past the older man, seeing the confused expression as those blue eyes studied him.
Take the chest… do not waste it.
Sighing, Max nodded and waited, the ten seconds it took for the body to vanish and the chest to appear felt like an eternity.
Two strikes, not even empowered. I almost felt bad for it.
No you don’t…
Bob laughed.

No… I really don’t.
Two purple crystals found their way into his storage, which Max had forgotten was incredibly full of dragon remains.
A new black cloak was tossed into storage, and Max hit the portal moments after it appeared.
“Seth?! How… how did you? It’s been only a few minutes at most!”
Nodding, Max jogged to where Major Greyson was standing between the portal and the area everyone left the tower from.
“I know. Like I said, I’m looking for my friends. I don’t have time as I need to reach the forty-eighth floor.”
Murmurs came from all the guards and a few adventurers who had appeared.
“You… you can’t be doing what I think you’re doing… the tower… it’s not—”
“Possible?” Max asked, finishing the older man’s words. “Just hang out here if you want. Grab a book and a chair. In fact, take mine.”
A chair appeared in Max’s hand, and he set it down, tapping the cushioned seat.
“I need to go. We’ll talk later. I’m sure you and Vella will want to talk with me as always, but I need to find the woman I love,” Max shouted as he ran up to the portal.
***
“Impossible.”
“Seven floors in so little time.”
Max’s hand trembled, and he shook his hand, trying to breathe and settle himself.
“You ok, son?”
Those words made fighting back tears even harder.
“It’s been so long… every day all I could think about was returning to her… to see her face… to hold her, kiss her and tell her I love her.”
Max sensed the hand that came, patting his back and felt the meaning of it all.
“Then stop standing here like a fool, and go tell her that. I have no doubt she is thinking the same things.”
Sniffing, Max nodded and wiped the tear that had somehow escaped and touched the portal.
There, in just about seven hours, the forty-eighth floor was an option to enter.
***
Max stood there, stealthed, as he found the group fighting four scorpions that were fifteen feet tall. Dexic was working side by side with Fowl, handling one of them while his dwarf friend blocked, parried and struck the two that were focused completely on him.
Tanila sent spell after spell upon the one Dexis was fighting, and Cordellia’s arrows pierced weak points in the beast, striking the joints and small eye sockets.
It appears they don’t need me… Is being a part of their group an option anymore?
You cannot tell me that you do not plan on joining them again.
No… I… I know I need to, but still… they are fighting like a real team. All I want to do right now is rush down there and slay everything so I can go to Tanila but if I do… then what? How… how do we move from here? And what about Dexic? She has helped them continue on in my stead. Who will be with her? Does her journey in the tower end?
No reply came from Bob as they watched the one Dexic had been fighting die and the trio engage the one that had been frozen.
Max could see that the fight was already well in hand, and a twinge of pain and guilt struck him as he waited, knowing the moment he went to them, he would destroy so much.
Stop being a fool, and go see the one who has kept you from becoming the monster you always feared. I’m tired. I need to rest. All this power is overwhelming, and it is going to take me a while to evolve.
You would leave me? Now?
Max felt the howl of laughter in his head as Bob let loose whatever emotion or feeling he had for a solid ten seconds.

My friend we have slain a world champion. You have become one. This tower right now means nothing. You do not need me to be in here, and you do not need me for what is going to come next. When you walk down there, you will find the woman you love. Everything you desire is there. Even…
Max waited as Bob paused for a few seconds, watching the second scorpion fall and the group move to the third.
Even when I tempted you with the power to be this way long ago, you resisted and turned me down. Because down there is a woman. An elven woman! Someone the world says you can't love and yet you did! I… I am not what I have always been. I'm something different, and… I'm okay with that. Whatever I am, whatever we are… we shall grow stronger, and we shall make those who threaten us or those below regret their words and actions.
For now, I'm going to make you move ahead. I'm going to evolve now. So you will either have to go alone until I return or move down this rocky terrain, stop hiding behind rocks, and be the hero these people think you are. You picked the name of one. It's time to give some honor back to him.
Max sighed.
Thank you, Bob. Go evolve. I'll be here whenever you return.
Be safe, Max Hoste.
[Consume is Evolving]
Taking a deep breath, Max saw the notification and took a step toward his friends.
"I guess it's time for me to grow up also."

57 Chapter 330

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2007461/chapter-330 2025-01-14;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/103099/authors-nightmare]

Chapter 330
"Finish it!" Fowl shouted as the last scorpion tried to jab him again with its tail, instead striking the shield and taking damage from it.
"I'm coming!" Dexic shouted as she yanked her sword from the scorpion she had just slain.
Max wasn't sure what he wanted to do for the longest time as he covered the hundred yards to where his friends were battling the last scorpion.
He knew Tanila was low on mana, her spells getting smaller with each one she sent.
So he did what he could, summoning an ice spear, pouring more mana in it than he needed and sending it at the last one when his dwarven friend called for help.
His spell penetrated the insect's head, coming from above and pinning it to the ground as it flailed for a moment.
"Finish it so you get the experience!" Max shouted, just ten yards from behind Tanila and Cordellia.
He watched as the most beautiful red headed woman he had ever seen slowly turned around, tears in her green eyes that matched his.
"Max?!" Cordellia exclaimed.
"Holy elf tits! Max!" Fowl cried out after he smashed his weapon into the scorpion once more before the voice that had called out made him turn around.
"Tanila, I'm back."

His voice broke as he moved toward her, catching her as she started to fall.
“You… you’re really here?”
He nodded, brushing her face with his hand, her voice having just been a whisper.
“Yes… every day…” Tears ran down his face, matching hers, and he choked for a moment. “Every day I fought to return… I—”
He went silent as strength returned to Tanila, and she grabbed his neck, pulling him close and pressed her lips against his.
Max let himself go, pulling her close to him, sitting down on the ground and wrapping his arms around her.
Nothing mattered, not the dungeon they were in and the rocks he was sitting on, or the four people who surrounded them, all in shocked silence as they stared, tears flowing down all of their faces as well.
“I need to breathe,” Tanila finally gasped as she pulled herself back a little, her hand rubbing up and down on his armor on his chest.
“You are the air I need every day,” Max replied, ignoring the groan Fowl let out.
“How… what… I… I knew you were alive,” Tanila said as she reached into her robe and pulled out her necklace. “Each day I woke up, and could go on, just because I knew you were still alive.”
Max pulled his out and showed it to her, smiling as he did.
“I’m grateful the gods or the tower gave us these. I cannot imagine the strength that gave you.”
She nodded and pulled him in again, kissing him as she had just moments before.
“Uh, not to interrupt, but we can leave the dungeon if you need to finish that,” Fowl said after clearing his throat.
“No, I’m fine,” Max replied, winking at his brother in arms. “I just got back about seven or eight hours ago. Tom told me you were in here, so I raced through the tower to find you.”
“So you cleared a tower wherever you were?” Dexic asked, her left eyebrow lifted high as she cocked her head.
“Not exactly… I… well, let’s not worry about that for now. If Tanila will let me stand, I would love to give each of you a hug as well.”
Clearing her throat, Tanila nodded.
“As long as you come back right after.”
“I promise,” Max said, giving her a kiss on her forehead.
Rising to his feet, Max grabbed each of them in turn, hugging his healer and lifting her off the ground.
“She’s missed you, we all have,” Batrire whispered in his ear. “You better have a good story, or so help me I’ll kick you in your nuts every morning.”
Coughing, Max nodded and set her down, moving to Fowl who already had his arms open wide.
“Gods, you look stronger than before!”
“As do you,” Max said as he gave his friend a good squeeze.
Cordellia waited next, shuffling a little, and she perked up as Max held his arms open, and she dashed toward him, returning his embrace.
“Welcome back, *Max* .”
He couldn’t help but laugh as she accented his real name.
“It’s good to see you, Cordellia. I’ve missed you and your low voice.”
“Gods, I finally had Fowl trained, and now you’re going to get him going again.”
Both of them chuckled as they let go, and Max turned to Dexic, standing there in her gold armor, no helmet as she studied him from a few yards.
“You’re not the boy I met in the adventurers hall. You’re something else. I can sense it.”
“I owe you a debt for helping my friends and protecting them.”
She shook her head and held out her hand.
“No, they have shown me the power of a family and an amazing group. You are fortunate to have them.”

Max grabbed her hand and pulled her close, giving her a hug and patting the taller woman on the back.
“I owe you… I’ll find a way to repay you,” he told her quietly.
“Let’s say we’re even. You saved my life.”
Nodding, he gave her a pat on the shoulder as they broke their embrace and turned his attention back to Tanila who was just a few feet behind him.
Holding out his hand, he smiled as she grabbed his and let him pull her close.
“So… tell me. How goes the tower climbing?”
They all chuckled as Fowl let out a groan.
“It’s slow… like weeks without a real bathroom slow.”
“Well, if you all want, we could skip this place and head back to the Faction house. I’m certain we’d much rather talk about what has happened there than in here.”
“I’m fine with not being able to enter for a while,” Dexic said.
“As am I,” Cordellia chimed in.
“Why would we wait to enter the tower again?” Max asked, smirking as he did.
Their ranger shook her head.
“Did you forget that if we leave, there is a cooldown?”
“No I remember,” Max replied. “However, I was thinking about us finishing this floor. If that’s okay with you all.”
“You want to fight with us or just clear the way?”
“I had a better idea,” Max informed Fowl. “I mean I could just carry you all if you wanted.”
“There’s five of us Max,” Batrire stated. “You can’t carry all of us.”
He gave Tanila a kiss on the cheek and winked at her.
“If you’re willing, my love, could I have just a moment to free my hand? I promise I’m not going anywhere without you.”
She gave him a sideways look, narrowing her eyes for a moment, and slowly bobbed her head, letting his fingers free from her death grip.
Moving a few yards away, Max cracked his neck and did a few small squats, putting on a show for them.
“Now listen. I won’t have a lot of time once I do this, so just be aware I’m going to grab you all and do my best to not injure anyone.”
He winked at Tanila who was shaking her head, and snapped his fingers, his chest piece vanishing into storage.
“Holy elf tits,” Tanila muttered.
“Okay, someone needs to tell me where he got those,” Fowl stated as he pointed at Max’s shredded physique.
“Sorry, this is more for the ride, I don’t want anyone getting slammed into the armor. Besides, if this floor is like the other ones, we’ll be fine.”
“The other ones?” Dexic asked.
Max didn’t reply, he simply transformed.
[Ultimate Form]
“HOLY ELF TITS!” Cordellia shouted as Max grew to eleven feet tall.
“Does everything get bigger?” Fowl asked.
Batrire swiped absently at her man, missing him completely as she couldn’t take her eyes off of Max.
“Time’s ticking, and we need to hurry, so hold on tight.”
***
Max and the others moved out of the portal and found themselves standing on the platform, surrounded by over two hundred people. Everett was there with Tom and many other members of their Faction.
“Impossible,” Tom stated.
“Everett!” Max exclaimed, moving to where the gray-headed man stood, staring at him in disbelief.
“Seth… it’s you… Tom said… and his story… flying and then the guards… Major Greyson… how… how in the gods?”

“Perhaps we can talk about that back at our Faction house,” Max whispered as he gave the man a quick embrace.
“Alright, everyone, I’m sorry to disappoint you by not being able to stick around and chat, but I’m finally back and need to return with my family and friends.”
Murmurs and some groans came from those gathered, but most were quiet, watching the man most believed was a legend who had vanished without a trace, returned in the most impossible way ever.
“Major Greyson, can we take our leave?” Everett asked, regaining his composure after a moment.
“Yes… I shall personally escort you and your members.”
He whistled and motioned to some soldiers who moved to where the carriages were, bringing a trio of them to where they could take everyone home.
“Let’s go home, my love,” Max said, whispering in Tanila’s ear.
***
No one spoke as his group, along with Tom, Everett, and Dexic, all sat in the Faction leader’s office, listening to the tale Max shared.
“Imprisoned, on another world,” Tom muttered when it was finally over.
“Yeah, focus on that and not him killing two dragons!” Dexic exclaimed as she pointed at the scales and teeth Max had deposited on the table.
“I would assume I don’t need to mention no one shares any information about this outside this room?”
Everyone nodded at Everett’s question.
“Good, then all we will say is that Max took a trip overseas and just returned. Nothing else. Understood?”
Once more a bobbing of heads came as Fowl fondled one of the dragon scales.
“What I want to know is what your plans are,” Cordellia asked.
“What do you mean?”
“Seriously? Come on, Max, you ran through that tower floor and didn’t have to fight anything. If I had to guess you can probably solo the forty-ninth boss!”
Sighing, Max felt everyone’s eyes on him, waiting to hear his response to her question.
“Fowl, do you remember the day you met me in Rumstant?”
“That’s a day I’ll never forget,” replied their tank. “You were green… so green.”
“What did I want to do?”
“Become stronger.”
“Have we done that?”
His dwarven friend nodded.
“Some more than others.”
Grinning, Max turned to Everett.
“What did we say our group was going to do?”
“Beat the tower,” their Faction leader replied with a grin.
“Have we done that yet?”
“Not that I’m aware of.”
“Which,” Max said as he turned his attention to Tanila, “means I still have a promise to keep. We’ll beat the 49th floor together. We’ll venture into the fiftieth floor and finish it. After that… there are a few things, I need to take care of, and if no one minds, I’d like to spend a little time outside the tower with you all.”
Tanila’s fingers tightened around his, and Max turned to see her smiling.
“I would enjoy some time outside of the tower with you.”
“Gods… she sees one giant Max, and all she can think about is—”
Fowl gasped when Batrire nut punched him.
“Woman… the beans… not in the beans…”
Everyone chuckled, and Max couldn’t help but laugh.
“I think now is a perfect time for me to take my leave with this beautiful woman here.”
“Go,” Everett said, smiling as he did. “Don’t pass up this moment.”
Standing, Max helped Tanila up and began to move toward the door.

“I’m not sure when we’ll leave our room, but trust me, it will be when both of us are ready.”
***
Max sighed as Tanila lay against his chest.
“A bath… with the woman I love… could this get any better?”
He heard her sniff as she ran her fingers along his chest.
“What’s wrong?”
Shaking her head, Tanila looked up at him and smiled.
“So long I have dreamed of this moment. You… and me… it hurt so bad… to know what you endured… to know why you fought so hard… how you overcame everything. I even know there is so much more you haven’t shared yet.”
Running his fingers through her wet hair, Max nodded, watching the candlelight reflect off the water and her wet skin.
“Yes… there are things… that almost broke me. But know that you are what kept me going. Even Bob was willing to help me remember that.”
“Tell Bob thank you for me.”
“I would,” Max replied with a shrug, “except he is silent right now. He’s evolving.”
Her eyes widened, and Max nodded.
“Neither of us knows what that means yet, but there is still so much I need to do, but none of it matters if I’m not with you.”
Tanila nodded and sat up in the water, not bashful at all as her top half was displayed before him.
“What does your Sonar skill tell you?”
Max shook his head as he studied her.
“As in what does the room look like or what I can tell about right now?”
“Close your eyes, Max. Use your skill. Tell me what you can feel and sense.”
He chuckled, and she glared at him, playfully, but he knew she was serious.
“Fine, I don’t need the skill to know how beautiful you are.”
“Just shut up and focus, you fool.”
Going silent, Max took a deep breath and let it out.
His skill surged from out of him as he tried to sense what she was talking about. The room they were in hadn’t changed much, their clothes scattered on the floor, as she hadn’t been willing to let him simply have her or him become naked with the dimensional storage. Water was on the floor from where it has splashed from the tub. Each candle was alive, the fire dancing above the wax.
There Tanila was, smiling as she watched him, her eyes staring straight at him. He could sense small things in her, her heart beat faster, her chest seemed just a little larger but having been gone so long it was probably wishful thinking he thought.
The water sent out small waves of something, and he wondered at first if she was banging her knee or body against the tub, but he realized it wasn’t that.
A fast steady pace that didn’t change.
From inside the water.
His eyes flew open, and his hand surged forward, touching her stomach.
She began to cry and nod, and Max felt his own tears streaming down his face.
“A child? Our child?”
“Yes! Our child!”
“How… I mean, how long?”
“Only a few months ago did I learn. The day I did I prayed you’d return not just to me but to our child.”
He pulled her close, his hand on her stomach, his Sonar penetrating her skin and beginning to form the shape of the small child inside.
“I… I can see them.”
“That’s not fair!” Tanila exclaimed, giving him a gentle slap on his shoulder. “Tell me though… how do they look? Is it a boy or a girl?”
Max shrugged.
“I doubt the cord I sense is a pecker, though Fowl would definitely say it is one… for now they are no bigger than my thumb. Still… their heart beats so strong.”

Sniffing, Tanila pulled Max closer and kissed him again.
“Promise me, Max. Whatever happens, we’ll both be strong enough to protect our child.”
Blinking a few times, he nodded and then pulled back a moment and studied her face. He could see her eyes and the tightness of her lips.
“People won’t want this child to be born, will they?”
She shook her head slowly.
“On both sides, there are many who will not. I need you to help me become stronger. I need to know we can protect our child.”
Max gently rubbed his finger on her belly and nodded.
“I’ve killed a world guardian to get to you. I will tear apart the heavens and stop a god if they were foolish enough to attempt such a thing.”
Tanila smiled and laid her head against his chest.
“I’m tired, Max. Come to bed with me.”
He cupped her chin with a finger and lifted her head up, staring into those beautiful green eyes.
“Every night, as long as you’ll have me.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Book 6 ends today!

I'll launch book 7 a little later this month (most likely the week of the 20th!)

Stay tuned for Amazon launch of book 6! As always I appreciate the reviews and those who read it again on it!

BOOK 6 END 2025-01-14;

Book 7 fully uploaded! Book 6 stubs Friday!

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2009526/book-7-fully-uploaded-book-6-stubs-friday 2025-01-16;

Just a reminder that due to Amazon’s rules I have to take book 6 down before the launch on the 20th of this month.

I also have book 7 completely uploaded and scheduled. 4 chapters hit on Jan 20th and then there will be a chapter a day until March 24th (ends March 24th). Last two weeks are 2 chapters a day!

as always I appreciate all the support you have given for this ride. Enjoy your week and looking forward to Monday!

just a fun update for those who want a little extra! My webtoon is going strong. Chapter 3 is getting colored as we speak and and chapter 5 has started its process! Looking forward to launching it later this year as well as having comic books / manga soon!

now all i need is someone to get an anime started 😂

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Don’t want to wait for Monday? My patreon just dropped chapter 344!